



The Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature

Edited by

Kevin Corstorphine · Laura R. Kremmel

palgrave
macmillan

The Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature

Kevin Corstorphine • Laura R. Kremmel
Editors

The Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature

palgrave
macmillan

Editors

Kevin Corstorphine
Department of English
University of Hull
Hull, UK

Laura R. Kremmel
Department of Humanities
South Dakota School of Mines
& Technology
Rapid City, SD, USA

ISBN 978-3-319-97405-7 ISBN 978-3-319-97406-4 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-97406-4>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018958968

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2018

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover credit: Katrina Brown / Alamy Stock Photo

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

FOREWORD

In some ways, the word title “Handbook” is a profound misnomer for this exceptional collection of essays on the literary horror tradition. A “handbook” denotes a book that offers up information and that collects what is already known. Kevin Corstorphine and Laura R. Kremmel’s *The Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature* certainly does this—but it does so much more. It opens up new reserves within the horror tradition, shapes new categories, offers insightful new readings of both literary subgenres and individual texts, and distills enduring and innovative critical approaches.

In a discipline—horror studies—that has been dominated by analysis of film, *The Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature* focuses squarely on literature. What is more, of the fourteen chapters in the first section, which maps the contours of an expansive, emergent global literary tradition of horror, only three take up what has arguably been the focus of studies of the literary horror tradition, late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British gothic. And, even then, the focus is on drama and chapbooks, not only the novel. Indeed, Corstorphine and Kremmel’s collection describes an enormously rich and varied landscape of horror, encompassing Indian aesthetics in third century BCE, the troll in medieval Norse mythology, the “indighorror” of Australian Aboriginal literature, and Native American writers and their representations of the windigo. While familiar names like Stephen King and Peter Straub appear in this section, it is in relation to their roots in the writing of nineteenth-century American women, Sarah Orne Jewett and Edith Wharton, not quite so well known in the horror tradition.

The Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature takes up the major themes of literary horror in its second section, including the more familiar zombies, vampires, dolls, and haunted and haunting children but extending to the labyrinth, with its “ability to trap, nullify, and transform,” medical horror, “devilish” devices, disability in horror, imperialism, and the forests and animals of horror literature. Some entries in this section take up a single text—Sandra Mills’s chapter on dolls, for example, offers a close reading of Ramsey Campbell’s *The Doll Who*

Ate His Mother (1976)—while others offer invaluable surveys, such as Bernice Murphy’s wide-ranging discussion of the different functions that animals (from cats to dogs to birds to cattle) have served within horror narratives. Whatever the approach, each chapter offers a wealth of texts and critical approaches that will serve as an important resource, in particular, for anyone thinking of teaching a course on literary horror.

The final section of *The Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature* takes up theoretical approaches to horror literature—and it is especially worthy of note that three chapters (by Ordner Taylor III, Tabish Khair, and Christina Dokou) are devoted to reading race and postcolonialism within the literary horror tradition. These chapters make it clear that reading beyond the confines of white Western writing discloses new paradigms and preoccupations of horror. Taylor, for instance, reads the legacy of slavery and racism in African-American horror literature, and Dokou looks at how we must read the monstrous mother and abjection quite differently in African-American texts that show mothers “abjecting” infants in dire circumstances that are not of their choosing. Chapters in this section take up ongoing approaches to horror, such as its distinctive ability to offer political commentary (e.g., in Aalya Ahmad’s discussion of extreme horror in the 1980s and 1990s and Coco d’Hont’s argument about the function of transgressive horror in the 1990s), as well as explore the ways in which relatively new theoretical directions illuminate horror (Mathias Clasen’s evolutionary approach to horror and Susan Yi Sencindiver’s elaboration of new materialism).

Corstorphine and Kremmel’s *The Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature* is a dazzling resource—an invaluable companion for anyone seeking to learn about horror literature, to teach it, or to launch out on their own research project. It is an essential collection for every horror fan or critic, from those merely interested in horror to those who themselves plan to write about it. Chapters survey horror literature itself as well as distill critical conversations—and in every case chapters make the kinds of provocative arguments and ask the kinds of questions that will generate still more innovative horror scholarship. If I were limited to only one book on horror literature, this would be it.

Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA
2018

Dawn Keetley

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all of the thirty-seven authors whose chapters make this such a strong contribution to the field of horror studies. We could not have completed the project without their hard work and patience. We also owe a debt to those scholars who were involved in the project at the very beginning and formed its foundation: Dawn Keetley and Tabish Khair. We would also like to extend our thanks to Darryl Jones for his recommendation.

We would like to thank our colleagues at the University of Hull, Lehigh University, and South Dakota School of Mines & Technology for their support and for providing a sounding board as we juggled the different aspects of the project. Thanks also to our colleagues and friends in the International Gothic Association for creating and sustaining the strong community of scholars from which we had to draw for the contents of this handbook.

Thanks to the editors of Palgrave for their confidence in the project and their invaluable support throughout the process.

Finally, we'd like to thank our families for their encouragement and moral support. Kevin would like to thank Lesley, Sophie, and Jacob Corstorphine for their patience. Laura would like to thank her parents for their support and dedicates her work on this project to the late Dr. Wendy Carse, who was committed to undergraduate education in Gothic and horror studies at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	1
	Kevin Corstorphine	
Part I	The Origins and Evolution of Literary Horror	19
2	<i>Bhayānaka</i> (Horror and the Horrific) in Indian Aesthetics	21
	Dhananjay Singh	
3	Horror in the Medieval North: The Troll	33
	Ármann Jakobsson	
4	The Horror Genre and Aspects of Native American Indian Literature	45
	Joy Porter	
5	Vampires, Shape-Shifters, and Sinister Light: Mistranslating Australian Aboriginal Horror in Theory and Literary Practice	61
	Naomi Simone Borwein	
6	Men, Women, and Landscape in American Horror Fiction	77
	Dara Downey	
7	Blood Flows Freely: The Horror of Classic Fairy Tales	91
	Lorna Piatti-Farnell	
8	Turning Dark Pages and Transacting with the Inner Self: Adolescents' Perspectives of Reading Horror Texts	101
	Phil Fitzsimmons	

9	Horror and Damnation in Medieval Literature	113
	Andrew J. Power	
10	The Jacobean Theater of Horror	127
	Tony Perrello	
11	“A Mass of Unnatural and Repulsive Horrors”: Staging Horror in Nineteenth-Century English Theater	139
	Sarah A. Winter	
12	Horror in Gothic Chapbooks	155
	Franz J. Potter	
13	“We Stare and Tremble”: Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Horror Novels	165
	Natalie Neill	
14	“The Horror! The Horror!”: Tracing Horror in Modernism from Conrad to Eliot	181
	Matthias Stephan	
15	Global Horror: Pale Horse, Pale Rider	191
	David Punter	
Part II	Themes of Literary Horror	203
16	Vampires: Reflections in a Dark Mirror	205
	Wendy Fall	
17	Zombie Fictions	219
	Anya Heise-von der Lippe	
18	“You Don’t Think I’m Like Any Other Boy. That’s Why You’re Afraid”: Haunted/Haunting Children from <i>The Turn of the Screw</i> to <i>Tales of Terror</i>	233
	Chloé Germaine Buckley	
19	Discussing Dolls: Horror and the Human Double	249
	Sandra Mills	
20	“They Have Risen Once: They May Rise Again”: Animals in Horror Literature	257
	Bernice M. Murphy	

21	Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Woods?: Deep Dark Forests and Literary Horror	275
	Elizabeth Parker	
22	Disability and Horror	291
	Alan Gregory	
23	Monstrous Machines and Devilish Devices	301
	Gwyneth Peaty	
24	"And Send Her Well-Dos'd to the Grave": Literary Medical Horror	313
	Laura R. Kremmel	
25	Imperial Horror and Terrorism	327
	Johan Höglund	
26	Postmodern Literary Labyrinths: Spaces of Horror Reimagined	339
	Katharine Cox	
Part III	Approaches to Literary Horror	353
27	Evolutionary Study of Horror Literature	355
	Mathias Clasen	
28	Transgressive Horror and Politics: The Splatterpunks and Extreme Horror	365
	Aalya Ahmad	
29	Boundary Crossing and Cultural Creation: Transgressive Horror and Politics of the 1990s	377
	Coco d'Hont	
30	"Maggot Maladies": Origins of Horror as a Culturally Proscribed Entertainment	391
	Sarah Cleary	
31	The Mother of All Horrors: Medea's Infanticide in African American Literature	407
	Christina Dokou	

32	Horror, Race, and Reality	423
	Ordner W. Taylor III	
33	Postcolonial Horror	433
	Tabish Khair	
34	Conceptualizing Varieties of Space in Horror Fiction	441
	Andrew Hock Soon Ng	
35	Toward an Acoustics of Literary Horror	457
	Matt Foley	
36	Hesitation Marks: The Fantastic and the Satirical in Postmodern Horror	469
	Laura Findlay	
37	“It’s Alive!” New Materialism and Literary Horror	483
	Susan Yi Sencindiver	
38	Horror “After Theory”	499
	Lyle Enright	
	Index	511

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Aalya Ahmad teaches interdisciplinary courses on international horror literature and film at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. She holds a doctorate in horror and has published articles, encyclopedia entries, chapters, and book reviews on race, class, gender, and indigenization in horror. With Sean Moreland, she edited the short fiction anthology *Postscripts to Darkness* and co-edited a collection on horror pedagogy, *Fear and Learning: Essays on the Pedagogy of Horror*. She is known as a public intellectual on feminist and social justice political issues, with magazine articles, media interviews, digital productions, workshops, and lectures. Aalya lives with her family in Gatineau, Québec.

Naomi Simone Borwein is a PhD student at the University of Newcastle, Australia. Her most recent projects involve contributing chapters on Australian Aboriginal horror to two McFarland editions, including *The Global Vampire*. Borwein is also producing several chapters in volumes on Modern Gothic, Steam Age Gothic, and Gothic Dreams for the new Palgrave Gothic Handbook Series.

Mathias Clasen is an Associate Professor in Literature and Media in the English Department at Aarhus University, Denmark. He is an associate editor of the journal *Evolutionary Studies in Imaginative Culture*. His research specialty is horror across media, and his most recent major publication is the academic monograph *Why Horror Seduces* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

Sarah Cleary was awarded her PhD by Trinity College Dublin, Ireland, and has dedicated her studies to exploring the juxtaposition between the media and the alleged negative effects of popular culture on children. Working on her first monograph with Palgrave, which details how the genre of horror has been censored in response to its alleged influence on children, she has published on a wide variety of horror and pop culture subjects. Splitting her time between lecturing and academic consultancy, Sarah is a regular contributor to radio shows, TV, and print media.

Kevin Corstorphine is a Lecturer in American Studies at the University of Hull, UK, where he teaches American literature including the Gothic, counter-culture, and border fiction. His research interests lie in horror and Gothic fiction, both literary and popular. His work explores representation of space and place, the environment, and haunted locations. He has published widely on authors including Bram Stoker, H.P. Lovecraft, Ambrose Bierce, Shirley Jackson, Stephen King, and Clive Barker. He is currently working on a cultural history of haunted houses.

Katharine Cox is the Head of English at Sheffield Hallam University, UK, where her leadership responsibilities include the strategic direction and development of English and the management of staff. She is currently the Secretary of University English, the main professional body for the English subject community. Her research is concerned with space, place, and literary architectures in contemporary literature. Katharine has recently co-edited a volume for Manchester University Press with Kate Watson, entitled *Tattoos in Crime and Detective Fiction: Marking and Remarking* (forthcoming), and is working on a monograph focusing on contemporary literature and labyrinths.

Coco d'Hont is a UK-based independent scholar who researches contemporary American fiction, popular culture, and gender and sexuality. Her first monograph, *Extreme States: The Evolution of American Transgressive Fiction 1960–2000*, will be published by Routledge/Taylor & Francis in 2018. Since completing her PhD in American Studies at the University of East Anglia, she has published an article on the music of Marilyn Manson in the *European Journal of American Studies*. Current works in progress include book chapters on Mary Harron's film adaptation of Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* and masculinity in Chuck Palahniuk's recent fiction.

Christina Dokou is an Assistant Professor of American Literature and Culture at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece, and holds a PhD in Comparative Literature from the Pennsylvania State University. She is interested in comparative studies of Greek myth in American literature, comics studies, American folklore, and gender studies (notably androgyny), areas in which she has published a variety of journal articles and book essays. She is the co-editor of two volumes of essays, *The Periphery Viewing the World* (Athens: Parousia, 2004) and *The Letter of the Law: Literature, Justice and Other* (Amsterdam: Peter Lang, 2013).

Dara Downey is an Associate Researcher/Visiting Lecturer in the School of English, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland. Her research focuses on the materiality and sociocultural functioning of domestic space in American gothic, uncanny, and supernatural fiction and popular culture. She is the author of *American Women's Ghost Stories in the Gilded Age* (Palgrave, 2014) and co-editor of *Landscapes of Liminality: Between Space and Place* (Rowman &

Littlefield, 2016). She is the editor of *The Irish Gothic Journal* (online) and the Vice Chair of the Irish Association for American Studies. She is currently working on a monograph on servants and slaves in American gothic.

Lyle Enright is a doctoral candidate in the English Department at Loyola University Chicago, USA. His research focuses on modern and contemporary literature, with an emphasis on intersections with political theology. He is currently writing a dissertation exploring literary expressions of divine power in the wake of postmodern and “Death of God” theologies, attending to the ways that divine protagonism continues to appear and function in the novels and poetry of the twenty-first century. His work has also appeared or is forthcoming in *Contagion*, *Cultural Analysis*, *Renascence*, and *Textual Cultures*.

Wendy Fall is a doctoral candidate at Marquette University, USA, where she is writing a dissertation about the shaping of Gothic fiction by (and for) the popular nineteenth-century press. She is the editor of *The Gothic Archive*, an online collection of chapbooks containing short retellings of Gothic novels and original short stories. Her work on this volume has been supported by the generosity of the Cyril Smith Family Trust.

Laura Findlay is a Research Assistant at the University of Dundee, Scotland. She has published on trauma and the works of Art Spiegelman, post-9/11 film and adaptation, as well as Bret Easton Ellis’s *American Psycho*. She has also written a comic, *Closure*, on trauma and visual representation and has worked as part of a writing team on a number of comics related to health and well-being. She is currently writing a monograph about true crime and popular culture.

Phil Fitzsimmons is an Associate Professor at Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, Australia. His research interests include representations of horror and the monstrous in popular culture and spirituality.

Matt Foley is a Lecturer in Modern and Contemporary Literature at Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. He has a broad range of research interests in the fields of modernist and Gothic studies. The author of *Haunting Modernisms: Ghostly Aesthetics, Mourning, and Spectral Resistance Fantasies in Literary Modernism* (Palgrave, 2017), he has published recently on Gothic voices as well as on interwar ghost stories. He is writing currently on the acoustics of Gothic literature. Before arriving at Manchester Met, he was a Lecturer in English at the University of Stirling, where his duties included being an acting Programme Director of their MLitt in *The Gothic Imagination*.

Chloé Germaine Buckley is a Senior Lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University, UK, where she teaches courses on the Gothic and children’s and young adult literature and film. She has diverse research interests within Gothic studies. Her first monograph, *Twenty-First-Century Children’s Gothic*

(Edinburgh University Press), explores children's literature and film, but she has also written on zombies, weird fiction, postcolonial gothic, and witches. She is a member of the Manchester Centre for Gothic Studies and the Games Research Network.

Alan Gregory holds a PhD from Lancaster University, UK. His publications include "Staging the Extraordinary Body: Masquerading Disability in Patrick McGrath's *Martha Peake*" and "Fabricating Narrative Prosthesis: Fashioning (Disabled) Gothic Bodies in Tim Burton's *Batman Returns*." He is currently editing a special issue of *Studies in Gothic Fiction* on Disabled Gothic Bodies and completing the monograph *Disabled Male Bodies in Contemporary Gothic Fiction* for Palgrave Macmillan's Literary Disability Studies series.

Anya Heise-von der Lippe is an Assistant Lecturer in English Literature and Cultural Studies with the Chair of Anglophone Literatures at the University of Tübingen, Germany, and a PhD candidate at the Freie Universität in Berlin. Her research focuses on Gothic bodies in postmodern and contemporary texts, particularly on the parallels between monstrous corporeality and monstrous textuality. Recent publications include the edited collection *Posthuman Gothic* (University of Wales Press, 2017) and the first volume in the forthcoming series "Challenges for the Humanities," *Literaturwissenschaften in der Krise* (co-edited with Russell West-Pavlov, Narr, 2018).

Andrew Hock Soon Ng is an Associate Professor at Monash University, Malaysia, where he teaches postmodern fiction, postcolonial writings, theories of authorship, and discourse analysis. His most recent book is *Women and Domestic Space in Contemporary Gothic Narratives: The House as Subject* (Palgrave, 2015), and he has contributed numerous articles on horror and the Gothic to various edited volumes and peer-reviewed journals.

Johan Höglund is an Associate Professor of English at Linnaeus University, Sweden, and Director of the Linnaeus University Centre for Concurrences in Colonial and Postcolonial Studies. He has published extensively on the relationship between imperialism and popular culture in the late Victorian era, in the long history of US global expansion and decline, and in the often-unrecognized era of Nordic colonialism. He is the author of numerous scholarly articles and of the monograph *The American Imperial Gothic: Popular Culture, Empire, Violence* (2014) and the co-editor of *B-Movie Gothic: International Perspectives* (2018), *Animal Horror Cinema: Genre, History and Criticism* (2015), and *Transnational and Postcolonial Vampires: Dark Blood* (2012).

Ármann Jakobsson is a Professor of Early Icelandic Literature at the University of Iceland. Among his major publications are *Í leit að konungi* (1997), *Staður í nýjum heimi* (2002), *Tolkien og Hringurinn* (2003), *Illa fenginn mjöður* (2009), *Morkinskinna I-II* (2011, co-edited with Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson), *Nine Saga Studies* (2013), *A Sense of Belonging* (2014), *Íslendingaþettir: saga*

bugmyndar (2014), *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas* (2017, co-edited with Sverrir Jakobsson), and *The Troll Inside You* (2017). He has also published four novels.

Dawn Keetley is a Professor of English at Lehigh University, USA. She is the co-editor (with Angela Tenga) of *Plant Horror: Approaches to the Monstrous Vegetal in Fiction and Film* (Palgrave, 2016) and (with Matthew Sivils) of the *Ecogothic in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Routledge, 2017), as well as the author of *Making a Monster: Jesse Pomeroy, the Boy Murderer of 1870s Boston* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2017). She is working on a book about folk horror (University of Wales Press) and a collection of essays on Jordan Peele's *Get Out* (Ohio State University Press). She writes regularly for her horror website, www.HorrorHomeroom.com.

Tabish Khair is an Associate Professor at Aarhus University, Denmark, and is also currently a Leverhulme Guest Professor at Leeds University, UK. He is the author of various acclaimed books, including the novels *Filming: A Love Story*, *The Thing About Thugs*, and *How to Fight Islamist Terror from the Missionary Position*. In 2016, he published a study, *The New Xenophobia*, and a new novel, *Just Another Jihadi Jane*, to critical acclaim.

Laura R. Kremmel is an Assistant Professor of English in the Humanities Department at South Dakota School of Mines & Technology, USA. Her work focuses on Gothic studies, British Romanticism, medical humanities/history, disability studies, and horror film, and she has published on the Gothic and disability in both *European Romantic Review* (2016) and *Studies in Gothic Fiction* (2018) and on zombies and mourning practices in Dawn Keetley's edited collection, *"We're All Infected": Essays on AMC's The Walking Dead and the Fate of the Human* (2014). She occasionally blogs for HorrorHomeroom.com.

Sandra Mills is a PhD candidate based in the School of Arts at the University of Hull, UK. Her thesis examines representations of the "living" doll in contemporary horror literature and film. She co-organized the interdisciplinary "(Dis)Connected Forms: Narratives on the Fractured Self" conference which took place at the University of Hull in September 2016. She has published on the work of Angela Carter and Carlo Collodi. Her wider research interests include children's literature, Gothic studies, death studies, adaptation, intertextuality, and contemporary science fiction and film.

Bernice M. Murphy is an Assistant Professor and Lecturer in Popular Literature in the School of English, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland. She has published extensively on topics related to horror fiction and film. Her books include *The Suburban Gothic in American Popular Culture* (2009), *The Rural Gothic in American Popular Culture: Backwoods Horror and Terror in the Wilderness* (2013), and *The Highway Horror Film* (2014). She is the co-founder of the

online *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies* and is a founding member of the recently established Irish Network for Gothic Studies (INGS). She was appointed a Fellow of the Trinity College Dublin in 2018.

Natalie Neill teaches in the English Department at York University, Toronto, Canada. Her areas of expertise include Romantic literature, the Gothic, satire and parody, women and literature, and film adaptation. Neill has published essays on Gothic parodies, historical Gothic novels, the commodification of *Frankenstein*, and adaptations of *A Christmas Carol*, among other topics. She has edited two nineteenth-century comic Gothic novels—*The Hero and Love and Horror*—for Valancourt Books. Currently, she is researching and writing about Edgar Allan Poe’s satires on female authors.

Elizabeth Parker is a Teaching Fellow in Contemporary and Popular Literature at the University of Birmingham, England, where she teaches on popular culture and theory, genre fiction, and gender and sexuality studies. She received her Irish Research Council (IRC)-funded PhD in 2016 from Trinity College Dublin. She is the founder of the forthcoming journal *Gothic Nature: New Directions in Ecohorror and the EcoGothic*, and her work was featured previously in such publications as *Plant Horror!* (Palgrave, 2016) and *Landscapes of Liminality* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2016). She is writing her first monograph, *The Deep Dark Woods: The Forest and the EcoGothic*, with Palgrave Gothic.

Gwyneth Peaty is an Internet Studies Lecturer at Curtin University in Western Australia. Her research focuses on monstrosity, horror, the grotesque, and the Gothic in pop culture and digital media. Recent publications include “Flâneurs of the Fallout: Monstrous Gaming in Post-apocalyptic Cityscapes” (in *Urban Monstrosities: Perversity and Upheaval in the Unreal City*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017) and “Power in Silence: Captions, Deafness, and the Final Girl” (in *Journal of Media and Culture*, 20(3): <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/1268>).

Tony Perrello is a Professor at California State University, USA, and teaches Early Modern and medieval literature. He writes on early British literature, publishing his own discovery and translation of a riddle in a medieval manuscript and advancing an argument for an overlooked source for Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, for example. Lately, Tony’s abiding interest in horror has crept into his classroom and his writing. He teaches seminars in cinematic and literary horror and has written both individually prepared and co-authored essays on horror auteur Alexandre Aja, the Saturday morning cartoon *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs*, and Jordan Peele’s *Get Out*.

Lorna Piatti-Farnell is the Director of the Popular Culture Research Centre at Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand. She is the President of the Gothic Association of New Zealand and Australia (GANZA). Her research interests lie at the intersection of contemporary popular media and cultural

history, with a focus on Gothic and horror studies. She has published widely in these areas and is the author of multiple single-authored books, including *The Vampire in Contemporary Popular Literature* (Routledge, 2014) and *Consuming Gothic: Food and Horror in Film* (Palgrave, 2017).

Joy Porter is a Professor of Indigenous History at the University of Hull, UK. Her books include *Native American Environmentalism* (2014), *Native American Freemasonry* (2011), *To Be Indian: The Life of Iroquois-Seneca Arthur Caswell Parker* (2001), and, with Kenneth Roemer, *The Cambridge Companion to Native American Literature* (2005). Her next books are *The Native American Poet of the First World War: Primitivism, Trauma and Modernity in the Life of Frank "Toronto" Prewett, 1893–1962* (Toronto, 2019) and *The Republican Roots of Modern Environmentalism* (Nebraska, 2020). She is the principal investigator for the research cluster "Treated Spaces," <https://treatedspaces.wordpress.com/>.

Franz J. Potter is an Associate Professor and Director of the MA in Gothic Studies Program at National University in Southern California, USA. His research interests include history of the book trade, the Gothic, and nineteenth-century chapbooks. He has written articles on the Gothic trade, sensationalism, chapbooks, print culture, and novelist Sarah Wilkinson and is the author of *The History of Gothic Publishing, 1800–1835* (2005). In 2010, he established the online journal *Studies in Gothic Fiction* and served as editor until 2015. He is currently working on a book on Gothic chapbooks and one on Gothic publishers and novelists.

Andrew J. Power is an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Sharjah, UAE. He has previously lectured at Saint Louis University—Madrid Campus, the University of Cyprus, and Trinity College Dublin. He is the editor of *Late Shakespeare, 1608–1613* and *Early Shakespeare, 1588–1594* (both with Rory Loughnane) and of *The Yearbook of English Studies* 2014 (special issue on "Caroline Literature" with Rory Loughnane and Peter Sillitoe). His forthcoming monograph is entitled *Stages of Madness: Sin, Sickness and Seneca in Shakespearean Drama*.

David Punter is a writer, poet, and academic and is currently a Professor of Poetry at the University of Bristol, UK. Beginning with *The Literature of Terror* (1980), he has published extensively on the Gothic as well as on many other literary topics: his books include *The Hidden Script: Writing and the Unconscious* (1985); *The Romantic Unconscious* (1989); *Gothic Pathologies* (1998); *Writing the Passions* (2000); *Postcolonial Imaginings: Fictions of a New World Order* (2000); *The Influence of Postmodernism on Contemporary Writing* (2005); *Metaphor* (2007); *Modernity* (2007); *Rapture: Literature, Addiction, Secrecy* (2009); *The Literature of Pity* (2014); and *The Gothic Condition: Terror, History and the Psyche* (2016).

Susan Yi Sencindiver, Ph.D. holds teaching and research appointments at the School of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University, Denmark. Her doctoral research centered on Anglo-American doubles in literature and film. She teaches and publishes in the fields of gender studies, literature, culture, and media. Her current research explores maternal and female midlife sexualities in twenty-first-century popular literature, media, and postfeminist culture. She is a coordinator for the Centre for Studies on Otherness (www.otherness.dk) and the associate editor of *Otherness: Essays and Studies*.

Dhananjay Singh is a Professor of English at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India, where he teaches and supervises research in comparative poetics, Indian aesthetics, Indian philosophy of language, modernist poetry, and modern Irish literature. He has published research articles and essays in these areas. He is the author of *Fables in the Indian Narrative Tradition: An Analytical Study* (2011). He is the assistant editor of *Encyclopaedia of Indian Poetics*, a project of Sahitya Akademi (Indian Academy of Letters), New Delhi, and Union Académique Internationale (UAI), Brussels. He is also the assistant editor of *Mutual Regards: An Anthology of Indo-Irish Writings* (2017).

Matthias Stephan teaches courses in the Gothic, fan culture, adaptation, intercultural studies, romanticism, detective fiction, science fiction, and literature by women at Aarhus University in Denmark. His work has appeared in *Scandinavian Studies*, *Coolabah*, *Otherness: Essays and Studies*, and *La Questionne Romantica: Crime and the Sublime*, and he has presented papers at numerous Gothic conferences. He serves as general editor for the interdisciplinary journal *Otherness: Essays and Studies* and as a coordinator of the Centre for Studies in Otherness. He received his PhD in Comparative and World Literature at the University of Illinois—Urbana-Champaign in 2016.

Ordner W. Taylor III teaches world literature and African-American literature at Delaware State University in Dover, Delaware, USA. His research interests include the convergences of the African-American experience and the Romantic literary traditions, as well as African influences on Latin American and Peninsular Spanish societies. His most recent publications include works exploring abolitionism, the African presence in Latin American literature, and the Harlem Renaissance.

Sarah A. Winter lectures at New College Durham, UK. She completed her PhD in nineteenth-century Gothic melodrama at Northumbria University and is also a fully qualified post-16 lecturer. She has published her research in *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* and the *Journal of Adaptation in Film & Performance* (for which she was a former editorial assistant). Sarah helped assemble the Melodrama Research Consortium, the first global network dedicated to melodrama, and has presented at international conferences and public talks, including the International Gothic Association, Oxford University's nineteenth-century theater symposiums, Northumbria University's "Summer Speaker Series," and Manchester Metropolitan University's Gothic Manchester Festival.



CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Kevin Corstorphine

Horror is everywhere. It is so pervasive that there is little point in dwelling on its real presence in the world. War, disease, famine, and eventually, inevitably, death and decay: the triumph of the “conqueror worm,” as Poe puts it (1982, p. 960). The question, then, is why dwell on it in literary form when there is beauty, joy, and love to explore? The first answer is that these are not mutually exclusive, either in our interest or even in the same text. The second is the self-evident: horror has fascinated human beings from the beginning. It is tempting to say from the first stirrings of our awareness of our own mortality. Suffering is universal, but horror might well be uniquely human.

This handbook aims to bring together a wide range of chapters about the ways in which horror has appeared in literature, seeking to give as comprehensive an account as possible. It is split into three sections: “The Origins and Evolution of Literary Horror,” “Themes of Literary Horror,” and “Approaches to Literary Horror.” The contributors are global, but the book nonetheless shows a leaning toward Anglophone traditions. It is hoped that the case studies offered from other cultural traditions and from innovative global literature will provide stimulating points of convergence and departure. We have aimed, also, to provide a wide account of “literature” that goes beyond the conventional boundaries of the Western understanding of the term. As such, this ventures into folklore (including oral traditions), religion, and mythology. It also, of course, covers a broad range of movements, traditions, and periods within literary history. The themes covered aim to provide an explanation for their effect and enduring potency. Zombies, vampires, and terrifying children all appear, but if the reader’s favorite horror monsters do not, then we can only apologize.

K. Corstorphine (✉)
Department of English, University of Hull, Hull, UK

Not every possible theoretical approach has been covered, although new readers should come away with a good sense of the kinds of ways in which critics have sought to understand horror in various texts.

Horror has perhaps found its most distilled expression in what has come to be known as the “Gothic.” It is through this lens that the most fruitful literary criticism has been carried out, and the field of Gothic studies continues to dominate the conversation. This is largely due to the immense popularity of the Gothic novel in Europe in the late eighteenth century. In English, authors including Horace Walpole, Clara Reeve, and Ann Radcliffe caused a sensation with their tales of seemingly supernatural occurrences and young women (sometimes men) in danger from nefarious villains. The horror was that of the crushing inescapability of a tyrannical past coming back to haunt the present. This was a theme interwoven with contemporary politics and culture, but one that has continued to resonate and find expression in different contexts. Chris Baldick defines the Gothic as, “a fearful sense of inheritance in time with a claustrophobic sense of enclosure in space, these two dimensions reinforcing one another to produce an impression of sickening descent into disintegration” (1992, p. xix). This has come to serve as somewhat of a standard definition, and the interplay of these two elements continues to appear in Gothic fiction and to be critically useful in a taxonomic definition of genre. The Gothic, from this perspective, does not just entail fear, or horror, but a way of looking at the world, with its own internal logic and assumptions. The reader of Gothic novels will inevitably come to an intuitive understanding, not only of their recurring motifs, but of a tone, mood, and aesthetic. None of this is integral to a broader understanding of “horror,” which can occur independently of the Gothic mode. As Clive Bloom comments, “Just as horror fiction can exploit the supernatural or the scientific, so it need not be confined to the trappings of ancient castles and crumbling abbeys” (1998, pp. 11–12).

Bloom’s reference to buildings is appropriate, as the term “Gothic” as an aesthetic description first emerges in discussions of architecture. Initially, this implied a barbarous lack of taste, with the word alluding to the Germanic tribes who sacked Rome in the fifth century. The feeling of horror creeps in at this point, with the implication that the Gothic is something foreign and threatening, as well as a destroyer of civilized values. As Fred Botting points out, the mood for Gothic as a specific style came about as a result of Enlightenment ideals, when Europe turned its attentions to its classical past as a model for society:

Taste, judgement and value were predicated on ideas of cultivation and civilized behavior that were entwined with social mores of public and domestic duty, harmony and propriety. The dominance of classical values produced a national past that was distinct from the cultivation, rationality and maturity of an enlightened age. This past was called “Gothic”, a general and derogatory term for the Middle Ages which conjured up ideas of barbarous customs and practices, of superstition, ignorance, extravagant fancies and natural wildness. (1996, p. 22)

Ruined buildings in the style that would be termed “Gothic” supplied evidence for this outdated value system and would accordingly become a staple feature of Gothic literature, where such settings could act as generic shorthand for this sense of superstition and danger. An enthusiastic audience for the pleasurable terrors conjured up in such novels was an emerging readership of young women; a phenomenon that caused no little consternation among conservative commentators. This is summarized well by Ellen Ledoux, who notes that:

A [...] serious debate rages in non-fiction prose about the effect of novel reading on young women, and this debate becomes more urgent once the Gothic novel comes into fashion. In an anonymous column called “Terrorist Novel Writing” published in *The Spirit of the Public Journals for 1797* the author suggests that Gothic novels do little to instruct and to prepare women for domestic life. The writer asks, “Can a young lady be taught nothing more necessary in life, than to sleep in a dungeon with venomous reptiles, walk through a ward with assassins, and carry bloody daggers in their [*sic*] pockets, instead of pin-cushions and needle-books?” (Anon., 1797). The author concludes that these narratives “carr[y] the young reader’s imagination into such a confusion of terrors, as must be hurtful” (Anon., 1797). In short, young female readers dissipate their time in a fantasy world of masculine adventure, rather than learning the skills necessary to run a household and to perform femininity. (2017, p. 5)

The politics of taste are here used to police women’s leisure time specifically, but the wider implication that fiction can be a dangerous influence on young minds is one that continues to appear in discussions of horror, although now more likely to manifest in tabloid scare stories about the corrupting power of horror films and video games. These attacks on horror predicated on “concern” may be motivated by politics or by the desire to drive newspaper sales, but, nonetheless, indicate something extremely valid: that there is no doubt an inherent appeal in these themes, particularly to young minds in the process of personal and social development. This is not, however, necessarily a bad thing, at least according to horror fans and many of the critics in this volume, who find the potential for positive personal and social transformation through the encounter with horror in fiction.

The anonymous article referred to by Ledoux, entitled “Terrorist Novel Writing” was published in 1797 and despairs of the current trend “to make *terror the order of the day*” (1802, p. 227). The author repeatedly deploys the term “terror” to indicate the effect of these novels on their readership, here negatively. “Terror,” however, has also been used to indicate a certain respectability that horror does not achieve. Ann Radcliffe distinguishes between the two in an article published as “On the Supernatural in Poetry” (1826). Here she claims that:

Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a higher degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them. I apprehend that neither Shakespeare nor Milton by their

fictions, nor Mr. Burke by his reasoning, anywhere looked to positive horror as a source of the sublime, though they all agree that terror is a very high one; and where lies the great difference between horror and terror, but in uncertainty and obscurity, that accompany the first, respecting the dreder evil? (2006, p. 315)

This famous distinction suggests that horror is merely an affect, and an unpleasant one at that, whereas terror has something of the profound in its proper execution. We might think of this as the difference between “showing” and “telling.” This is also a distinction that rests on ideas of taste, and there is something rather genteel in this idea that even terror writing can be redeemed by its capacity to stir the soul and the intellect. True horror, the kind that “freezes” the faculties, is not welcome. This is less relevant to our present purpose, however, than it was to Radcliffe, writing as a practitioner of the style of terror writing that she advocates. It is an aesthetic and a stylistic distinction above all else. Terror, however tastefully it is presented, contains the traces of an implied horror beneath the surface. Horror is “the soul of the plot” (1965, p. 961) to return to Poe’s poem, “The Conqueror Worm” (1843). Accordingly, we use the term “horror” here as a blanket reference that does not exclude writing in the “terror” style described by Radcliffe. Certainly, much of the material under discussion here does not just subtly evoke feelings of fear, but positively revels in the horrific.

What, then, are we afraid of? Why does horror occur so frequently and so powerfully in literature? Perhaps the most influential essay after Radcliffe’s appears a century later in the form of H.P. Lovecraft’s “Supernatural Horror in Literature” (1927). Here, Lovecraft surveys the Gothic tradition as well as developments through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. He writes approvingly of Radcliffe’s novels and her technique of explaining the supernatural by rational means, although he rejects the need for what we can identify as an instructive element in the novels, certainly in terms of the development of “sensibility”—an awareness and appreciation of landscape, art, and the emotions that were considered to be crucial to moral character, but also to be kept rationally in check. This is seen most obviously in Jane Austen’s parody of Gothic novels (and especially Radcliffe), *Northanger Abbey* (1817), where the young protagonist Catherine Morland spends so much time devouring “horrid novels” that she embarrasses herself by seeing supernatural occurrences and sinister plots in everyday circumstances. An appreciation of terror in the correct aesthetic way could thus help to cultivate sensibility and moral feeling. Lovecraft denies that there should be a need for “a didactic literature to uplift the reader toward a suitable degree of smirking optimism” (2011, p. 423). He but claims that in creating such an effective atmosphere, Radcliffe touches upon something truly terrifying, “despite a provoking custom of destroying her own phantoms at the last through laboured mechanical explanations” (2011, p. 434).

Lovecraft’s own conception of horror was shaped by developments in science and culture, particularly in physics, philosophy, and biology in the nineteenth century. His writing evidences a horror at the lack of meaning in the

universe, as if it is playing out the nihilism predicted by Nietzsche's madman who proclaims that "God is dead" as he sinks into despair. S.T. Joshi summarizes Lovecraft's position on this matter:

Lovecraft summed up his philosophical thought by the apt term "cosmic indifference." This is at once a metaphysical and ethical stance; or, rather, the ethics is inherent in the metaphysics. Modern science tells us that—whatever may be the actual "stuff" of the nature—the earth is but a tiny inkblot in the vast expanse of the cosmos. The whole history of human life is a momentary incident in the ceaseless churning of electrons that makes up an eternal and infinite universe. (1990, p. 175)

"Indifferentism" might be from a philosophical position, but there is a horror implicit in the stripping away of the old certainties by evolutionary science in particular, as well as its corroborative evidence in geology and physics. Superstition might be banished by modern science, but the universe that is revealed is far older than could have been previously imagined and even more terrifyingly mysterious. In one of Lovecraft's short stories, "The Shunned House" (1937), the narrator digs down under a supposedly cursed house only to uncover part of an elbow of a monstrous beast lying under the earth. He recoils in horror and dumps vessels of acid in the pit to destroy the nameless thing. Science might be illuminating parts of what nature might be, but in doing so only exposes our horrifying ignorance.

It is telling that the response of Lovecraft's narrator is to destroy the creature. What his stories consistently show is the capacity of horror to inspire hatred, directed toward the object of horror. The opening line of "Supernatural Horror in Literature" is suggestive of this idea: "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown" (2011, p. 423). Lovecraft's claim is an inherently pessimistic one. Where, a critic might ask, is love in this formulation? If procreation and the continuation of the species are shown to be foremost by Darwinian evolution, then surely there is a place for emotions beyond fear. It is, of course, true that in the conditions of tribal warfare and predation by other species that our ancestors lived in, that fear must have been omnipresent and an essential survival mechanism. Fear of the unknown, however, translates easily into fear of the other—something that postcolonial critics have consistently identified in texts produced under the British Empire, for example. In his classic novella *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Joseph Conrad's ivory trader Kurtz "goes native" in the Belgian Congo, surrounding his house with decapitated heads. For Kurtz, Native Africans are not only inferior but monstrous, as a handwritten note on his official report indicates: "Exterminate all the brutes!" (2006, p. 50). As he dies, his final words of "The horror! The horror!" indicate his loathing of the place and people that, as he sees it, have destroyed him (2006, p. 69). Lovecraft's own racist views are notorious, and his personal letters, as well as elements of his stories, indicate a deep-seated fear of almost every racial grouping outside

of his own white Anglo-Saxon Protestant stock. It is important to recognize that horror writing most definitely has the capacity to demonize along lines of ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, and so on. The best writing, of course, takes the opportunity to play with these categories and the reader's expectations, and in any case an informed critical approach to even the most bigoted or partisan text is essential, as can be seen by the approaches deployed here.

Fear of the unknown remains a compelling idea and one that is well suited to literary narrative in its ability to drive the story forward. Whether or not a true horror is revealed beyond the terror, the production of fear remains paramount. Xavier Aldana Reyes, in a recent history of horror literature, notes that horror is "largely defined by its affective pretenses" (2016, p. 7). These affects are alluded to by Radcliffe in her reference to Edmund Burke's conception of the sublime, appearing in his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756). Here, Burke writes that, "it is one thing to make an idea clear, and another to make it *affecting* to the imagination" (1768, p. 101). This, for Burke, is the peculiar power of the written word, in using poetic description to convey more than just the impression of an idea. He identifies the unknown, or the *obscure*, as a crucial factor in the production of this affect of terror. He claims that:

To make anything very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary. When we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes. Every one will be sensible of this, who considers how greatly night adds to our dread, in all cases of danger, and how much the notions of ghosts and goblins, of which none can form clear ideas, affect minds which give credit to the popular tales concerning such sorts of beings. (1768, p. 99)

Ambiguity is essential to the classic ghost story, where the atmosphere tends to dissipate as soon as any kind of clarity is given. This ambiguity is well suited to the literary form, where only words can be used to provide description. This is certainly not to say that a skilled filmmaker cannot produce ambiguity through direction and editing, but it is a different proposition that takes different techniques to achieve the same result. As a good example, we might think of Robert Wise's film *The Haunting* (1963), an adaption of Shirley Jackson's novel *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959). Wise emphasizes the psychological aspects of the novel and as a result the film remains far more successful than Jan de Bont's 1999 remake, where the eventual appearance of computer-generated ghosts destroys any sense of tension that has been built up previously.

This handbook focuses on literary narratives but will inevitably draw on the wealth of critical material produced on horror film. Although it takes great skill to make a horror film to match the subtle terror of, say, an M.R. James ghost story, horror in its cruder forms is remarkably effective on camera. It is for this reason that horror is a staple of low-budget filmmaking, because bold camera techniques and a certain degree of ingenuity in terms of special effects makeup

can work as well, or in some cases are better than more lavish productions. George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) is a prime example, although Romero's clever sociopolitical commentary also helps it to transcend its low-budget genre roots. Ken Gelder, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's writing on cultural production, writes of horror that:

Some people are anxious about it, others defend it, even relish it; a great deal has been said about it one way or the other. Horror texts thus have real socio-cultural effects, making available [...] a range of positions and dispositions; they have their own "politics," in the sense that they are never represented to the world in a neutral way. But the rhetorics of horror circulate more broadly still. They provide ways of defining, for example, what is evil (and what is good) in societies, what is monstrous (and what is "normal"), what should be seen (and what should remain hidden), and so on. These rhetorics are put to use routinely not just in horror texts themselves, but in the very same socio-political system that can find itself worrying about their proliferation. (2000, p. 1)

Gelder makes clear the point that horror narratives are part and parcel of the sociocultural systems in which they appear. If they cause a level of anxiety in these systems, then this is likely because they are hitting a nerve, or too close to the bone, to use appropriately visceral metaphors. This is not to say that horror should be exempt from criticism, but the very opposite: it is crucial to look carefully at the representations therein and to relate these critically to their cultural contexts and to critical theory. Horror stories need no help in emerging from the chaos of the world, but an imaginative engagement with the monstrosity that plagues our existence can allow for an exploration of what this might mean to us, and an establishment of some kind of order, although this can come from different sides of the political spectrum.

Stephen King, undoubtedly the most famous of modern horror authors, argues in *Danse Macabre*, his own commentary on the genre, that horror is essentially conservative in nature:

Monstrosity fascinates us because it appeals to the conservative Republican in a three-piece suit who resides within all of us. We love and need the concept of monstrosity because it is a reaffirmation of the order we all crave as human beings ... and let me further suggest that it is not the physical or mental aberration in itself which horrifies us, but rather the lack of order which these aberrations seem to imply [...] After all, when we discuss monstrosity, we are expressing our faith and belief in the norm and watching for the mutant. The writer of horror fiction is neither more nor less than an agent of the status quo. (1993, pp. 55–56)

An instructive counterpoint, however, comes from the British-born author Clive Barker, who sees horror as taking a much more progressive and even radical stance. In a 1998 introduction to his debut collection *Books of Blood* (1984), he discusses his work in the context of a carnival, suggesting that this kind of release is essential for a culture that, for the most part, demands we repress the

darker side of our natures (1984, p. x). Joining this carnival, he claims, is a transformative experience: “If we once embrace the vision offered in such works, if we once allow the metaphors a home in our psyches, the subversion is under way” (1998, p. 100). Barker’s view here has a distinctly Bakhtinian feel. In his 1940 essay “Rabelais and His World,” Bakhtin points out the difference between the official feasts of the middle ages, which “sanctioned the existing pattern of things and reinforced it,” and the carnival (1998, p. 45). Here, he claims that:

As opposed to the official feast, one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed. (1998, p. 45)

Bakhtin’s formulation of the carnivalesque, taken on by Barker, offers a substantial challenge to King’s assumptions, although neither view is beyond question as authorial intent often has little bearing on cultural reception. Nonetheless, it would be unreasonable to disregard the issues raised by these authors’ assertions, particularly as related questions of moral responsibility and literary value tend to crop up in any discussion of horror fiction. What will become clear in reading the entries in the present collection is the ways in which horror fiction is capable of oscillating between these impulses of order and change and of lending itself to reading against the grain in terms of both audience reception and critical analysis.

This book is organized into three sections: on the earliest appearances of horror in ancient traditions and how this has evolved over time; recurrent themes in horror and the manifold ways in which they are deployed; and ways of approaching horror literature through theory and in cultural context.

THE ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF LITERARY HORROR

The present volume seeks to locate literary horror within a continuity that stretches back to preliterate practices of oral storytelling. These ancient traditions form the basis of the mythology and folklore that constitute the earliest written texts and continue to flow through horror writing in the present. Dhananjay Singh, in “Bhayānaka (Horror and the Horrific) in Indian Aesthetics,” looks to the concept of the *bhayānaka rasa*, theorized as far back as the third century BCE and translating to an aesthetic, or literary, experience of horror, applied to theater and to poetry. Here, horror emerges as something that can be experienced as pleasurable and even enlightening. The wider context of horror seen here opens out the scope of this handbook’s account of the full range of possible ways in which to encounter the horrific in the text. Ármann Jakobsson, in “Horror in the Medieval North: The Troll,” examines the representation of the troll in Norse mythology, as seen in the writings of

Snorri Sturluson as well as lesser-known works. The troll emerges as a malleable figure, which can be different things in different contexts, in contrast to the way in which such creatures have been codified and packaged for the modern commercial world. This is important, as Jakobsson argues that the representation of the troll is inseparable from language and also the human subject that is actually revealed by the portrayal of such monstrosity.

The process of European colonization has been a horror story for many of the world's indigenous peoples over the last several hundred years. Joy Porter's "The Horror Genre and Aspects of Native American Indian Literature" deals directly with this point, arguing that horror emerges among settler communities as a means of dealing psychologically with their destructive victory. On the other hand, horror can also be used by the colonized as a way of writing back. Porter views the former as inherently conservative and inseparable from a colonial desire to control and contain. Depictions of Indians as threatening or vengeful, often tied to the supernatural, can be seen from early "captivity narratives," which reveled in describing the supposed savage nature of the Indian, to the later cliché of the "old Indian burial ground" seen in contemporary horror. Conversely, Native traditions have taken a more nuanced view of the supernatural that does not necessarily entail horror, as seen in the works of authors such as Leslie Marmon Silko and Sherman Alexie. These are discussed alongside more overtly "horror" writing by Native authors. These texts, according to Porter, use "horror to introduce American Indian perspectives on the past, counter-memories that challenge ideas on ownership and sovereignty of material, psychological and spiritual space."

Naomi Borwein turns to Australia with "Vampires, Shape-Shifters, and Sinister Light: Mistranslating Australian Aboriginal Horror in Theory and Literary Practice." Here, Borwein looks to the horrors inherent in the Aboriginal Dreamtime and discusses the ways in which this dark side of creation myth intersects with the real-life horror of "Terra Nullius," whereby all claims to Native ownership of land were stripped away by colonial power. Borwein describes how Native authors have used a genre she designates as "indighorror" as a means of resistance and protest through their unique, and often misrepresented, depictions of monstrosity. Where both Porter and Borwein touch on colonial anxieties through the depiction of Native peoples, Dara Downey, in "Men, Women, and Landscape in American Horror Fiction" turns directly to the relationship between the settler and the colonized landscape, which becomes a source of gendered horror. Here the male subject, cast in the role of bold pioneer, encounters a feminized landscape that disrupts the narrative of conquest and colonization through the grotesque and the abject. In doing so, Downey gives an account of the theme from the frontier period and authors such as Louisa May Alcott and Sarah Orne Jewett to contemporary horror authors such as Stephen King and Peter Straub.

A major source of contention in horror has always been the relationship between horror writing and children. Subject to censorship and age restriction, horror tends to be viewed as something unsuitable for the young reader.

Horror, however, is never far away from the imagination of even the most well-adjusted child, and children's stories are suffused with themes and imagery of the most extreme forms of horror. European fairy tales, deriving from oral traditions and then collected and anthologized, are now directed primarily to an audience of children, and considered ideal bedtime reading at that, despite the murder, cannibalism, abandonment, and mutilation that fill their pages. Lorna Piatti-Farnell, in "Blood Flows Freely: The Horror of Classic Fairy Tales," notes the way in which "fairy tales have existed as part of a pedagogical framework aimed at children" and stresses the didactic element of punishing villainy as an explanation of the categorical separation of fairy tales and Gothic horror through the ages. Nonetheless, the relationship between the two, Piatti-Farnell argues, allows us to explore the extent to which fear is inherent and/or culturally constructed. Phil Fitzsimmons undertakes an ethnographic approach to studying the reception of horror texts among adolescents in "Turning Dark Pages and Transacting with the Inner Self: Adolescents' Perspectives of Reading Horror Texts." Here, Fitzsimmons examines in detail the ways in which encountering horror can be a positive and necessary aspect of growing up, noting that children and young people have a more sophisticated understanding of the ways that such narratives operate than they are often given credit for.

Andrew J. Power continues the exploration of pre-Gothic horror in "Horror and Damnation in Medieval Literature," by examining the presence of horrific imagery in biblical pageants, saints' lives, exemplary tales, and romances. Although presenting the contexts in depth, Power collapses to an extent the distance between these early narratives and modern horror, showing that the imagery has much common ground. Power's argument negotiates the boundaries between fear, comedy, and the possibility of redemption, and this theme also appears in Tony Perrello's "The Jacobean Theater of Horror." Here, Perrello examines what might be the clearest forerunner for the violent excesses of the Gothic novel in the form of revenge tragedy. The plays of Kyd, Middleton, Shakespeare, and Webster are also compared fruitfully to modern horror in terms of their gore and the presence of taboo themes, but with a distinction in the way that they portray this excess. Perrello argues that the plays operate through the production of a "poetry of violence" that serves to bring horror to life on stage. Sarah A. Winter's discussion of drama moves forward to the nineteenth-century English stage, where she focuses on stage technologies and the specific ways in which productions sought to induce a feeling of horror in their audiences. Appropriately titled "'A Mass of Unnatural and Repulsive Horrors': Staging Horror in Nineteenth-Century English Theater," Winter examines plays based on *Frankenstein*, the character of Sweeney Todd, and ghostly narratives, showing a direct link to the development of horror film in the twentieth century.

The final entries in this section move back to the development of prose horror, beginning with the largely forgotten format of chapbooks: small pamphlets characterized by their extremes of sensationalist excess. Franz J. Potter, in "Horror in Gothic Chapbooks," explains how Gothic stories found their

expression in the late eighteenth century, not just in novels, but also in periodicals and in these mass-produced and wildly popular editions. The Gothic chapbook as a phenomenon disappears before the middle of the nineteenth century, but its ghostly form, Potter argues, has much to tell us about how horror has evolved into the present. Natalie Neill covers more familiar ground in “‘We Stare and Tremble’: Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Horror Novels.” Here, Neill makes much-needed connections between the famous texts of this period and earlier narratives of the type discussed earlier, showing, “how the horror novel evolved as a result of the novelists’ imitation and reworking of earlier texts.” Like other entries in this collection, it also focuses on affect and audience reception to horror, exploring the appeal of these works as well as the shock and controversy generated.

One of the main goals of this collection is to split horror from a limited genre-based approach. Horror viewed as genre tends to connote a sense of being shocking, sensational, or pulpy (and indeed there is much evidence for this in earlier chapters). An area that tends to be critically neglected, however, is the presence of horror in literary Modernism. Mathias Stephan goes some way toward redressing this in “‘The Horror! The Horror!’: Tracing Horror in Modernism from Conrad to Eliot.” Taking the iconic final words of Conrad’s Kurtz as a starting point, Stephan uses Modernism as frame to link the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in terms of the horror of the unknown. The focus on “destruction, disenchantment, and fragmentation” that can be seen in the work of Yeats and Eliot is discussed in the context of their age. War poetry, too, tends not to be discussed in terms of horror, perhaps due to the uncomfortable awareness of its too-harsh reality. The poetry of Wilfred Owen, however, very explicitly uses horror imagery, and Stephan addresses this directly in terms of poetic structure and Owen’s intentions. Concluding this section is a wide-ranging entry by David Punter entitled “Global Horror: Pale Horse, Pale Rider.” Punter reassesses the work of Julia Kristeva, whose work has become so integral to work in this area, and uses this lens to analyze a range of horror fiction that is both contemporary and global. Punter examines in detail the operations of what he refers to as “the twin gods of globalization and modernity,” arguing that horror can be used as means of resistance that is capable of exposing not the “powers of horror” (to allude to Kristeva’s famous work) but actually the “horror *caused* by power.” What emerges from this section as a whole is the sense in which horror exposes something crucial to culture and society, and if it does indeed touch a nerve, then this should not be seen as an act of violence in itself, but as a means of indicating the wounding that has already taken place.

THEMES OF LITERARY HORROR

As mentioned previously, it would be foolish to attempt an exhaustive list of the themes present in horror literature, but those that recur frequently can tell us much about the concerns of a culture at a given moment, the ways in which we conceive the self, and the ways in which we relate to the world beyond human

society. This section begins with monsters: horror monsters have shifted to adapt to different times and places, and, in the case of vampires, this adaptability is built in through the quality of immortality (albeit have risen from the grave). Vampires appear throughout this volume, but Wendy Fall places them at the forefront in “Vampires: Reflections in a Dark Mirror.” The most famous of these creatures is of course Stoker’s *Dracula*, but Fall traces their origins back through earlier literary examples to the folkloric traditions where they first appear. Vampires, Fall contends, are the most human of horror monsters, dramatizing our anxieties through a supernatural lens. Vampires carry with them connotations of glamor, which are sadly absent from the related figure of the zombie. Anya Heise-von der Lippe examines this nonetheless popular monster across a range of recent texts. The title of “Zombie Fictions” adopts the plural form in order to reflect the multitude of interpretative possibilities offered by the zombie, whether a critique of consumer culture, the condition of “going viral,” or the problem of human connection in a “posthuman” neoliberal capitalist society.

Where earlier entries have focused on the positioning of the child within debates around horror, Chloé Germaine Buckley focuses on children within the text, in “‘You don’t think I’m like any other boy. That’s why you’re afraid’: Haunted/Haunting Children from *The Turn of the Screw* to *Tales of Terror*.” Here, Germaine Buckley uses Henry James’s classic tale as a touchstone for the use of children in contemporary novels by John Harding and Chris Priestley. In horror, children tend to be represented not as they are, but are used as repositories for adult fears. Set against a backdrop of Victorian sentimentality and Freudian theorizing, these texts, Germaine Buckley argues, “foreground the problem of narrative perspective and point to possible routes beyond the impasse of childhood otherness without either sentimentalizing the child or claiming impossible knowledge of its ‘true’ nature.” Germaine Buckley draws on Sue Walsh’s argument that childhood in horror is produced through the perspective of others, meaning that childhood becomes inherently uncanny. Sandra Mills analyzes an even more overtly uncanny figure in horror in “Discussing Dolls: Horror and the Human Double.” Dolls have historically been used as both toys for children and as imitations of children themselves, meaning that they occupy a rather odd aesthetic territory that is somewhere between child and corpse. Certainly, Sigmund Freud saw the potential of reading dolls in this manner with his famous analysis of E.T.A. Hoffmann’s “The Sandman” (1816) in his essay “The Uncanny” (1919). Mills focuses on the work of British author Ramsey Campbell and his recurrent and calculated use of the doll motif. The horror, Mills argues, lies in the in-between, in the possibility of doubt as to whether the doll is an object or a living being capable of malevolent intent.

Humanity’s ambivalent relationship with nature has also been historically characterized by an ambiguity of interpretation. Should nature be thought of properly as an object or “thing” for human use or as an ecosystem possessed of a life as equally valid, or more so, than our own? Gothic and horror studies in the early twenty-first century have focused on the presence of what Simon

C. Estok has termed “ecophobia.” As human beings, Estok argues, we have shown ourselves to “take agency outside of ourselves as threats,” and ecophobia is “how we respond emotionally and cognitively to what we perceive as environmental threats and as a menacing alienness” (2014, pp. 130–131). Two entries here deal directly with these sources of perceived nonhuman agency, beginning with Bernice Murphy’s “‘They Have Risen Once: They May Rise Again’: Animals in Horror Literature.” Murphy contends that animals are used in a multitude of ways in horror fiction, sometimes serving as horror monsters themselves, but at other times functioning as uncanny reminders “of the liminal physical and moral boundaries between humanity and the non-human other.” Elizabeth Parker moves even further into the territory of the nonhuman in “Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Woods?: Deep Dark Forests and Literary Horror.” In an expansive argument, Parker presents seven key theses as to why the forest has become such an evocative place of fear and uncertainty in the human imagination and in horror fiction specifically.

The idea of what constitutes the human or otherwise is a constant theme in this collection. Alan Gregory’s “Disability and Horror” examines the ways in which the disabled human body has been used to inspire horror and to be used as shorthand for the monstrous. Horror fiction, however, should not be seen as merely exploitative, as Gregory argues that, despite this undeniable association of disability and monstrosity, horror literature serves to “facilitate a reconfiguration of the disabled body” and can even be read as celebratory affirmation of such bodies. Gwyneth Peaty analyzes the intersection of the human and the technological in “Monstrous Machines and Devilish Devices,” where she contends that “Technology disrupts the perceived borders between spirit and matter, life and death, human and nonhuman.” As such, technological developments, and speculation as to where they might go next, have become a source of horror that turns a skeptical eye on the notion of progress as purely a force for good. Likewise, Laura R. Kremmel demonstrates how the development of medical technology has brought its own horrors in “‘And Send her Well-Dos’d to the Grave’: Literary Medical Horror.” In an analysis of medical horror from early Gothic to contemporary novels, Kremmel examines how in these texts, “healing becomes exploitation, experimentation, and terrorization for a goal that circumvents the benefit of the individual patient.” The dynamics of power that occur in the medical setting, as well as the real and immanent threat of the horrific realities that we all inevitably face, mean that medical horror, as with many of the other themes seen here, “contributes to a cycle that articulates fears that already exist, as well as accentuating and perpetuating those fears.”

Flows of power are also the subject of Johan Höglund’s “Imperial Horror and Terrorism.” Höglund examines the figure of the terrorist from fiction of the British Empire to contemporary narratives centered on the relationship between the US and the Middle East. Horror, Gothic, and literature in general have frequently invoked the monstrous figure of the terrorist in order to defend and legitimize Empire. On the other hand, as Höglund writes, “Imperialism and

colonialism are engines of horror that render asunder social, religious, and economic structures as well as bodies.” Perspective, as with so many other entries here, is necessary if we are to understand the dynamics of horror and how monstrosity is represented. To finish this section, Katherine Cox examines a theme that is both ancient and contemporary in “Postmodern Literary Labyrinths: Spaces of Horror Reimagined.” The Cretan myth of the Minotaur in the labyrinth encompasses many of the themes of horror including taboo sexuality, deformity, monstrosity, and dangerous space. Cox uses novels by Angela Carter and Mark Z. Danielewski as case studies through which to examine the ways in which inner and outer realities intersect to horrific effect. The tangled labyrinth becomes a site especially rich in signification and, like so many of the themes discussed so far, allows for both the portrayal of abject monstrosity and a negotiation of fear that “results in the potential for positive transformation.”

APPROACHES TO LITERARY HORROR

Theory has been touched on in many entries so far, and the boundaries between sections are, by necessity, permeable. The final section, however, focuses most intently on theorizing literary horror and evaluating the ways in which it has so far been approached. Attempts to understand horror open up the temptation to appeal to primal drives, exemplified by Lovecraft’s claim that “the oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear” (2011, p. 423). Despite this urge to speculate, however, a thoroughgoing analysis of horror through the lens of evolutionary psychology has not been so far produced. Mathias Clasen, in “Evolutionary Study of Horror Literature,” claims that this is in part due to the interpretation of horror being hijacked by psychoanalytic paradigms that bear little relation to reality. Clasen argues that “the stories that captivate and frighten us fall within an extremely narrow subset of all logically possible stories—that subset, the possibility space of horror, is constrained by human nature.” In doing so, he moves toward the possibility of accounting for the presence of such recurring themes as have been discussed in the previous section and attempts to bring to bear the factual discoveries of evolutionary science on horror literature.

Two entries explore the politics of taste in relation to transgressive horror fiction of the 1980s and 1990s. First is Aalya Ahmad’s “Transgressive Horror and Politics: The Splatterpunks and Extreme Horror.” Ahmad reads the willful excess of 1980s horror writing (including authors such as Clive Barker, Jack Ketchum, and Joe Lansdale) against the backdrop of contemporary politics, arguing that the gory violence and horrific death portrayed in such works serve a function in “unsettling distinctions and exposing hypocrisies,” and its very lack of perceived artistic merit challenges conventions of taste. Coco d’Hont’s “Boundary Crossing and Cultural Creation: Transgressive Horror and Politics of the 1990s” focuses on the interplay between the literary and popular, discussing the work of Bret Easton Ellis, Mark Z Danielewski, and Poppy Z. Brite. If horror can indeed be viewed as reinforcing social norms, d’Hont argues,

then this kind of transgressive horror is different in the way that it “provides opportunities for the critical dissection of perceived truths and opens up opportunities for the imagination of alternatives.” Both Ahmad and d’Hont touch on the history of the politics of taste surrounding horror, but a full discussion of this background appears in Sarah Cleary’s “‘Maggot Maladies’: Origins of Horror as a Culturally Proscribed Entertainment.” Here, Cleary contextualizes censorship of horror by exploring the controversies surrounding Gothic novels, with particular reference to Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796) and Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya; or, the Moor* (1806). Cleary draws links between these and later discussions around horror, arguing against a conservative reading of horror by claiming that such fiction unsettles precisely because of its capacity to destabilize social order.

Horror has proven to be a place where issues of identity, including racial ones, come to the fore. Often, this takes the form of an uncritical fear of the other, but many critics in this collection have also identified horror’s capacity to analyze this fear and to offer transformative possibilities. Christina Dokou begins a cluster of entries that critically engage with race, with “The Mother of All Horrors: Medea’s Infanticide in African American Literature.” Dokou explores the motif of African-American women becoming perpetrators of infanticide, in an echo of the classical Medea. Discussing the work of Frances Harper and Toni Morrison alongside Julia Kristeva’s idea of the abject, Dokou argues that such horror operates to criticize society, as the mother’s relationship with the child takes place “within a socially neurotic context” (slavery) that must continually be borne witness to through cultural representation if we are to properly confront its legacy. Ordner W. Taylor III also examines slavery in the US in “Horror, Race, and Reality.” In this entry, Taylor looks at the specific ways that African-American authors continue to deal with the past and the present in the context of the very real horror of slavery. Taylor’s claim is a crucial one: “where Europeans and their American descendants dealt with philosophical bondage and theoretical horror through the Gothic literary tradition, enslaved Africans in America lived a Gothic experience.” It is important, therefore, to deal directly with the reality of slavery and its fictional representation, where the presence of horror operates quite differently than it does in the European tradition. Tabish Khair’s entry on “Postcolonial Horror” also makes distinctions between traditions of writing. Pointing out that postcolonial authors tend to avoid horror, Khair notes that this is surprising, given horror’s insistent interrogation of thresholds and boundaries. Horror, though, must work differently in the postcolonial context. As Khair notes, “colonial horror teems with images of the non-European Other,” where blackness or exotic dress functions as shorthand for the frightening. This must necessarily fail in the context of the colonized reader. Examining texts from India, but also Australia and Canada, Khair argues that postcolonial horror, where it appears, is always interesting in its drive to interrogate the very categories that define horror.

An increased attention to spatial concerns has been fruitful in humanities research, and horror literature, with its haunted houses and other locations, is fertile ground for such analysis. Andrew Hock Soon Ng, in “Contextualizing Varieties of Space in Horror Fiction,” takes seriously the claims of space and attempts to move beyond the Freudian uncanny as an interpretive tool toward a reading that used Foucault’s conception of the heterotopia, Deleuze’s fold (or *pli*), and the idea of the melancholy object. By considering the materiality of architecture, Ng opens up a more expansive reading of haunted space that does not necessarily have to symbolically invoke the unconscious mind in order to prove meaningful. Matt Foley also proposes new ways of reading space in “Towards an Acoustics of Literary Horror.” Foley’s close attention to the textual representation of sound allows for a varied reading of them from ventriloquism in Charles Brockden Brown’s *Wieland* (1798) to demonic moans in William Peter Blatty’s *The Exorcist* (1971) and the echoing labyrinth we have encountered before in Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves* (2000). Foley reveals a surprisingly rich “genealogy of sonic horrors ready to be traced” through literary history.

Horror emerges throughout this handbook as something that is often playful and self-reflexive, certainly in the best literary examples. The postmodern mode, then, is in many ways a natural bedfellow, but there are also problems. Horror often evokes a very painful awareness of the real, and postmodern irony can potentially serve to remove any sense of genuine dread. Laura Findlay examines Bret Easton Ellis’s *Lunar Park* (2005), alongside other novels, in “Hesitation Marks: The Fantastic and the Satirical in Postmodern Horror.” Findlay explores the distinctions between horror, satire, and the postmodern, arguing that the deconstruction of the text, author, and even self presents a horror as equally profound, or more so, than that of mere monstrosity. In “‘It’s Alive!’ New Materialism and Literary Horror,” Susan Yi Sencindiver uses new materialist thinking to examine nineteenth-century horror fiction, exploring the ways in which “the sensuous dimensions and visceral immediacy of literary language may elicit the affective sensibilities of horror.” Sencindiver argues that “horror’s healthy, albeit obscene, reminders of agentic and bodily materiality bruise humankind’s narcissistic fantasies of omnipotence.” The nonhuman material presence, though horrific, is capable of affecting us in a humbling and even ethically positive way. To finish the collection, Lyle Enright’s “Horror ‘After Theory’” uses Paul Tremblay’s novel, *A Head Full of Ghosts* (2015), as a case study through which to draw attention to the ways in which contemporary horror authors use theory as an essential part of narrative construction prior to literary analysis. This does not mean that critique of horror is over, but rather that horror literature may be entering exciting new territory where “the power of the unknown regains its ability to frighten from a space outside explanation or symbolism.” The new questions lie in how to respond to such texts, their horrors, and the challenges they present.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aldana Reyes, Xavier. 2016. Introduction: Why, Why and When Is Horror Fiction. In *Horror: A Literary History*, ed. Xavier Aldana Reyes, 7–17. London: The British Library.
- Anonymous. 1802. Terrorist Novel Writing. In *The Spirit of the Public Journals for 1797*, ed. Stephen Jones, 227–229. London: James Ridgeway.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1998. Rabelais and His World. In *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, 45–51. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Baldick, Chris. 1992. Introduction. In *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales*, ed. Chris Baldick, xi–xxiii. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Barker, Clive. 1984. Introduction. In *Books of Blood Volumes 1–3*, ed. Clive Barker, vii–vxi. London: Sphere.
- Bloom, Clive. 1998. Introduction: Death's Own Backyard. In *Gothic Horror: A Reader's Guide from Poe to King and Beyond*, ed. Clive Bloom, 1–22. Basingstoke & London: Macmillan Press.
- Botting, Fred. 1996. *Gothic*. London: Routledge.
- Burke, Edmund. 1768. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. London: J. Dodsley.
- Conrad, Joseph. 2006. *Heart of Darkness*. Edited by Paul B. Armstrong, 3–77. New York & London: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Estok, Simon C. 2014. Painful Material Realities, Tragedy, Ecophobia. In *Material Ecocriticism*, ed. Serenella Iovion and Serpil Opperman, 130–140. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Gelder, Ken. 2000. Introduction: The Field of Horror. In *The Horror Reader*, ed. Ken Gelder, 1–7. London & New York: Routledge.
- Joshi, S.T. 1990. *The Weird Tale*. Holicong, PA: Wildside Press.
- King, Stephen. 1993. *Danse Macabre*. London: Warner.
- Ledoux, Ellen. 2017. Was There Ever a 'Female Gothic?'. *Palgrave Communications* 3: 17042. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2017.42>.
- Lovecraft, H.P. 2011. Supernatural Horror in Literature. In *Eldritch Tales: A Miscellany of the Macabre*, ed. Stephen Jones, 423–492. London: Gollancz.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. 1982. The Conqueror Worm. In *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*, 960–961. London: Penguin.
- Radcliffe, Ann. 2006. On the Supernatural in Poetry. In *Gothic Readings: The First Wave 1764–1840*, ed. Rictor Norton, 311–316. London: Continuum.

PART I

The Origins and Evolution of Literary
Horror

Bhayānaka (Horror and the Horrific) in Indian Aesthetics

Dhananjay Singh

Horror is one of the primary forms of aesthetic experience in the Indian aesthetic tradition. This chapter offers an analysis of its theoretical discourse that covers a range of categories and subcategories about the objective manifestation of horror in both text and performance, as well as its subjective experience in the form of the numerous emotive and psychic states. It draws literary evidence from the seminal texts of Indian literature that elucidate its understanding. In its argument that horror as an aesthetic experience is a pleasurable experience attained by a complete freedom of the self, this chapter also refers to the conceptual framework of horror as theorized in the Western tradition.

The English equivalent of the Sanskrit word *bhayānaka* is “horror” or “terrible.” *Bhayānaka rasa* is often translated as literary or aesthetic horror, *rasa* being a core concept in Indian aesthetics, meaning the effect that human experience when represented in literature, theater, dance, or other art forms has on the human mind (Bharata 1950, p. 105). But the English word “horror,” or “terrible,” its physical and psychological efficacy, only communicates the *abhidhā* (the basic meaning) of *bhayānaka rasa* and does not evoke its aesthetic philosophy and its continuum of emotions and ideas, which underlie the Indian term. As a form of consciousness (*cita*), awakened by a rich repertory of psychophysical temperaments, *bhayānaka* shares certain features of the sublime as enumerated by Edmund Burke (1729–1797), Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), but the Indian aesthetes’ idea of an independent pleasurable form of consciousness makes the former subtly different.

D. Singh (✉)

Centre for English Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies,
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India

Etymologically derived from the root *bhī*, it denotes an object or being that causes or is affected with fear, terror, dread, or dismay (Monier-Williams 2005, p. 747). The theorization of *bhayānaka* and its literary representation is informed with a myriad of diverse emotional states evoked by a set of formalized aesthetic situations, which manifest in the gestural, speech, and bodily behaviors of the dancers and the actors on the stage. The apotheosis of this aesthetic experience, however, is an awakening and experience of consciousness (*cita*) itself, its pure form, without empirical content.

Literary Horror or *bhayānaka* is defined as a *rasa* (aesthetic experience) evoked by the special elements of the literary language, its suggestive nature, and, in theater or performance, by the special nature of the spectacle that transforms an empirical situation into an art experience through “a psychosomatic system by establishing correspondence between the motor and the sensory systems. The psychical manifests itself in the physical and the physical can evoke the psychical” (Vatsyayan 2007, p. 19).

The first theorization of *bhayānaka rasa*, most elaborate in the history of Indian aesthetics, is found in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (third century BCE) attributed to sage Bharata. Literally translated as the *Treatise on Theater/Performance*, it is an encyclopedic text in thirty-six chapters containing manuals on the eleven elements of theater and performance, which include aesthetic flavor (*rasa*) as the goal of theater, the emotional states of being (*bhāva*-s), the four kinds of enactment (*abhinaya*), four styles or modes of human behavior (*vṛtti*), regional variations of performance (*pravṛtti*), and so on. These concepts and theories themselves get expressed in a performative mode, through dialogical exchanges between the *guru* (Bharata) and his disciples, who aspire to master the craft of theater. The numerous references to the previous masters make obvious that centuries of performative traditions preceded this theoretical text. This text was written during that stage in the performative tradition when elements of performance had to be coded into rules and concepts, such as that of different forms of aesthetic experiences (*rasa*), including *bhayānaka* (horror). The methodology of the text abrogates any separation between theory and performance.

The theorization of *bhayānaka* includes both “horror” and “the Horrific.” As a subject experience of an author, actor, spectator/reader, it conveys a mental and physiological reality of a being transformed by horror. On the other hand, the textual or artistic representations, a structure of symbols, images, sounds, words, and body movements as objects of perception in the artistic situation, make it imperative to translate *bhayānaka* as “the Horrific.” *Rasa* (the aesthetic experience) of *bhayānaka* is used as both a subjective experience of horror and the objective structure of the Horrific.

The literary representation of *bhayānaka* (horror and the Horrific) can be traced to first book of world poetry, the *Rigveda* (1500–1200 BCE), which contains authorless verses believed to have been directly received from the space by the enlightened seers (*Ṛṣi*-s). The unmediated perception of the transcendental sounds provides the seers with an insight into secret mysteries

of the existence underlying the world of names and forms. In religion and mysticism, art and philosophy, the two sense organs considered most amenable to transcend the empirical limitations are the eye and the ear. Therefore, the most preferred form of literature and art in India has been oral/aural (*śravya-dṛśya*), dance, theater, and oral/performative poetry.

One of the poetic episodes in the *Rigveda* narrates a battle between Indra (the king of gods) and Vṛtra, a terrifying demon. This conflict represents the strife between the antagonistic forces to possess dominion over the cosmos. In lines of poetic sublimity, both the demon and the god are terrifying. In verse V.32, Indra decimates the immense power of nature in order to subdue it. Indra is addressed as the conqueror of nature and the destroyer of the demon (Dānava), subduing their power and fury:

You violently split the wellspring; you reamed out its apertures. You
Brought to peace the floods, which had been hard pressed.
When Indra, your pried apart the great mountain, you set loose the streams,
You smashed down the Dānava. (Brereton and Jamison 2014, pp. 696–697)

The terrifying powers of nature and this demon subdued, the poet introduces one most ferocious demon, more ferocious than a formidable unnamed beast:

With his power Indra smashed the weapon of the very one, the great wild beast
Who was thinking himself unopposable even on his own. But then there was
born one more powerful than he ... the child of fog, grown very strong, emerg-
ing from darkness
The wrath of the Dānava-s.... (Brereton and Jamison 2014, p. 697)

This most fierce Vṛtra is identified only indirectly by the poet as one of the Dānava-s. He is too formidable in his size and dynamic strength to be fully represented by a name or for the sensory organs to perceive him clearly, making him the very epitome of horror and terror: “That very one, lying just so horribly swollen, having got so strong in/Sunless darkness” (Brereton and Jamison 2014, pp. 696–697).

Dānava is a generic name for the one belonging to the Dānava community. He is also addressed in the poem as Śuśaṇa (the hisser), but that’s the name of Indra’s other enemy. His unnamed status makes him “a sort of empty and open-ended deictic that attracts a series of shifting descriptors of the Horrific. The emphasis on darkness (vss. 4, 5, 6), fog (vs. 4) and emptiness (vs. 7) also suggest an indistinct enemy that lacks proper definition” (Brereton and Jamison 2014, p. 696).

The idea of *bhayānaka* implied in this verse is that of an embodiment of darkness, an invisible dangerous being of great physical proportion that defies the possibility of being contained within the structure of logic and language. The inexpressibility of horror as a cognitive experience is theorized later in the Indian tradition, but this idea is clearly evident in this verse itself. This idea of

the *bhayānaka*, as it were, is echoed by Burke in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1812). For Burke, darkness necessarily causes an experience of sublime, a pleasurable terror due to the objective distance and harmless existence of the terrifying object or ghostly being (Burke 1990, p. 130). Where the Indian understanding of aesthetic terror and its association with darkness differs from Burke is similar to what Immanuel Kant meant by the subjective reflection of the experience. The obscurity of the demon in Burkean sense is certainly associated with the feeling of astonishment in the seer-poet at the sheer ferocity and fearfulness evoked by it. However, the demon or nature as objective references is merely a medium for the stimulation of the form of terror innately existing in the mind of the reader, a purely subjective experience. The Vedic poet describes the sensory presentation of the demon as “lying just so horribly swollen,” yet the experience of terror depends upon the terrifying formlessness and namelessness of the demon, “so strong in Sunless darkness.” It is an experience of the sublime expressed by Kant in his distinction between the beautiful and the sublime as “to be found in a formless object in so far as limitlessness is represented in it ... and yet it is also thought as a totality” (Kant 2000, p. 128).

In the Indian worldview, since the *bhayānaka* is an innate state of consciousness, and since all the world is a manifestation of the absolute consciousness (Brahman), its associative experience is not limited to the demonic beings. There is no binary between good and evil, god and demon as far as the universality of *bhayānaka* is concerned. If the Dānava is horrible to look at and excites incomprehensible horror, so does Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* when he reveals his Virāṭa-Rūpa (the Supreme form) “having many mouths and eyes, with many arms, thighs and feet, with many stomachs, and fearful with many jaws” to Arjuna, who is “filled with amazement, and with hair standing on end...” and exclaims, “looking at this wonderful and terrible form of yours, O high-souled one! the three worlds are affrighted.” All the multitude of armies in the battlefield are sucked fast into his mouths “fearful and horrific ... and some with heads smashed are seen (to be) stuck in the spaces between the teeth” (Telang 2007, p. 93). And yet Kṛṣṇa is wondrous to Arjuna in this form. Horror, as will be explained later, is pleasant in Indian aesthetics, because it evokes self-consciousness, a free experience of the self.

The *Upaniṣad-s*, as the philosophical expositions of the Vedic verses, recognize the universality of horror. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (fifth to first century BCE), for example, describes Brahman, the Absolute Being, as idealization of terror as well as producing terror:

Whatever there is, the whole world, when gone forth (from the Brahman), trembles in its breath? That Brahman is a great terror, like a drawn sword. Those who know it become immortal.

From terror of Brahman fire burns, from terror the sun burns, from terror Indra and Vayu, and Death, as the fifth, run away. (Müller 2011, p. 21)

The most authoritative and comprehensive discourse of the theory of literary horror is to be found in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the source text of all Indian performative and fine arts, as well as aesthetics. Horror (*bhayānaka*) is one of the eight aesthetic sentiments or experiences (*rasa*) theorized in the text. Abhinavagupta (tenth to eleventh century CE), a prolific pre-modern literary theorist from Kashmir, an exponent of the philosophical school called Kashmir Śaivism, formulates the ninth *rasa* called *śānta* (tranquility) and, thereby, makes the Indian art, literature, and performance a representation of *nava-rasa-s* (nine *rasa-s*).

In order to get to the root of the literary horror (*bhayānaka rasa*) that is a form of aesthetic flavor or tasting (*rasa*), it is imperative to examine the semantic genealogy of *rasa*. Unlike the classical Greek of Plato and Aristotle, whose conceptual categories lack linguistic equivalence in the modern European languages, all conceptual terms of Sanskrit have been words of common vocabulary in major modern Indian languages. Also, most of the conceptual terms of literary theory or philosophy are words of ordinary experience. *Rasa* in its literal as well as the literary sense denotes juice, flavor, or taste. The word appears in the *Rigveda*, where Ṛṣi (Seer) Agastaya offers a hymn to the food: “O sweet food, honeyed food, we have chosen you / ... these juices (*rasa-s*) of yours, food, are dispersed throughout the realms, / adjoined to the heaven like the winds” (Brereton and Jamison 2014, pp. 4–5).

The juice or essence of the natural objects as constituting elements of the universe is talked about in this hymn. This idea will find more philosophical footing when the Vaiśeṣikā School of Indian philosophy, first enunciated by Kaṇāḍa (second century BCE), would explain *rasa* as one of the constitutive elements of the universe. But the difference between the two texts separated by centuries of thought is the transition from objective essence of natural objects to the subjective taste inherent in the sense organs. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (sixth to fifth century BCE) dissolves the opposition of the external and the internal world in the meaning of *rasa* and posits it as a whole with its cause in the Absolute Self:

From the Self (Brahman) sprang ether (ākāśa, through which we hear); from ether air (that through which we hear and feel); from air fire (that through which we hear, feel and see); from fire water (that through which we hear, feel, see and taste); from water earth (that through which we hear, feel, see, taste, and smell). From earth herbs, from food seed, from seed man. Man thus consists of the essence (*rasa*) of food. (Müller 2011, p. 54)

The aesthetics of horror in Indian art and literature draws its philosophical foundations, its structure, and its interpretive practices from this vision. There are two broader points implied here. One that the aesthetic experience (*rasa*) is an experience that dissolves the duality of the self and other, the subject and the object. And second that art or literature has an objective structure as well as a subjective flavor, as in the case of an edible thing like a grain or a herb, there are objective constituents of a herb or grain as well as a subjective tasting

of its flavor. Sheldon Pollock rightly credits Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka (ninth century CE), a literary theorist from Kashmir, who wrote the now lost the *Hṛdayadarpaṇa* (*Heart's Mirror*), for effecting a hermeneutical transformation in Indian aesthetics by “redirecting attention away from the process by which emotion is engendered in and made accessible through the literary work, and towards the spectator’s or reader’s own subjective experience of this emotion” (Pollock 2010, p. 146). However, the essence of Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka’s aesthetics is implied in the above *upanīṣadic* verse.

Bharata defines the aesthetic experience (*rasa*) at the objective level as a configuration of textual, sensorial, and psychological elements. In a performative mode of knowledge dissemination, he tells his disciples, who have come to the *guru* to learn the craft of theater: “In that connexion [sic], I shall first of all explain the sentiments (*rasa*). The Sentiment is produced (*rasa-niṣpattiḥ*) from a combination (*samyoga*) of Determinants (*Vibhāva*), Consequents (*Anubhāva*), and Transitory States (*Vyabhicāribhāva*)” (Bharata 1950, p. 105).

“Sentiment,” as translated by Manmohan Ghosh, limits the full import of the word *rasa*. *Rasa* is both the object of and meaning in drama, poetry, and other art forms, as well as an effect that human experience, when aesthetically represented, has on the human self. Implied in this definition is the distinction between life and literature. The empirical experience of horror is not formless. It is the form that the mind seeks to assume in real-life experience of horror. Its full illumination, however, happens when human consciousness frees itself from all constraints of the empirical experience, paradoxically as an effect of the artistic representation of empirical horror (the Horrific).

The elements of a literary work include *vibhāva-s*¹ (the determinants), the situations, events, images, and symbols in the text to evoke emotive states in the characters. The effects of these determinants on the characters perceptible in gestures, body movements, speech, and so on are the *anubhāva-s* (consequents), which the actors or performers aim to represent during a performance. The actors also have to train themselves in representation of the various transitory emotional states (*vyabhicāri-bhāva-s*) of the characters and represent them through gesture, speech, and body movements during a performance. This structure is conspicuous for the categories it doesn’t name, the permanent psychological states (*sthāyī-bhāva-s*), which Bharata lists separately but does not mention in his definition of aesthetic experience (*rasa*). There are numerous interpretations offered for this omission. Abhinavagupta provides the most convincing argument in the eleventh century CE, when he says that it is the permanent psychological state that transforms into *rasa* (aesthetic experience). In the context of *bhāyānaka*, horror as an innate and universal psychological state is different from emotional, physiological, physical, and textual elements that have characterized it. There are nine permanent psychological states and the corresponding nine aesthetic experiences/sentiments.

Another distinction is that what one experiences in life is *bhāva* (psychological state), but what one experiences in literature or art is an aesthetic experience or sentiment (*rasa*), and the two are different forms of experience.

The eight aesthetic experiences described by Bharata are the Erotic (*śṛṅgāra*), the Comic (*bhāsyā*), the Pathetic (*karuṇā*), the Furious (*raudra*), the Heroic (*vīra*), the Horrific (*bhayānaka*), the Odious (*bībhatsa*), and the Marvelous (*adbhuta*). The corresponding permanent psychological states are Love (*ratī*), Mirth (*bhāsa*), Sorrow (*śoka*), Anger (*krodha*), Energy (*utsāha*), Terror/Fear (*bhaya*), Disgust (*jugupsā*), and Amazement (*vismaya*). The transitory psychological states are thirty-three in all, such as anxiety, envy, agitation, and so on, and their chief function in the literary/aesthetic configuration is to either intensify or alleviate the effects of the permanent psychological states. There is another category of psychological state called the involuntary psychological states, which are evoked along with the sensory emotions, and these include horripilation, change of voice, stupefaction, and so on.

While describing the Horrific (aesthetic experience) in drama or theater, Bharata says, “Now the Terrible Sentiment (Bhayānaka Rasa) has as its basis the Dominant state of fear. This is created by Determinants like hideous noise, sight of ghosts, panic and anxiety due to (untimely cry of jackals and owls), staying in an empty house or forest, sight of death or captivity of dear ones, or news of it, or discussion about it” (Bharata 1950, p. 114).

The genius of the writer depends upon the ability to create original determinants (*vibhāva-s*), which can be classified into two: the characters in whom the sentiment of horror inheres and the contextual factors exciting horror, the former termed by the Sanskrit poetics as *ālambana vibhāva* and the latter as *uddipana vibhāva*. In literary horror, the characters, who experience the sight of ghosts or hear hideous noise or see others experiencing them and are affected by a contagious horror, are the former and can be characterized as forming the ontological aspect of horror, while the events and the physical contexts qualifying them form the contextual factors (*uddipana vibhāva*).

It is the aesthetic situation that evokes a related mental state in the character. The consequent gestures that the actors represent thereafter evoke the aesthetic experience in the spectators. The consequents of the permanent psychological state of fear (*bhaya*) are to be represented in theater and classical Indian dance by “looseness of the limbs, the mouth and the eyes, trembling hands and feet, palpitation of the heart, dryness of the mouth, licking the lips, tremor, apprehension (of danger), seeking safety, running away, loud crying etc.” Horror arising from hearing scary objects is enacted through aesthetic consequents such as “slackened limbs and suspended movement of the eyes ... tremor of hands and feet, and palpitation of the heart, paralysis, licking lips, drying up of mouth, loosened limbs and sinking (*visaṇṇa*) body” (Bharata 1950, p. 97).

Abhinavagupta (tenth to eleventh century CE) in *Abhinavabharatī*, his commentary on the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, holds that horror and the Horrific, like the Comic, is a contagious consciousness and psychic behavior. A perception of the horror aroused in others can also evoke the horrific sentiment in the self, even without the direct perception of the aesthetic or empirical situation (as cited in Pandey 2008, p. 219).

The transitory emotional states are ancillary to the durable or permanent psychic states and are repository of the life experiences. They are not inborn forms of the human consciousness. Since they are mental forms originating from the life experiences, they are capable of being enacted through the actor's mastery of the corresponding gestural and other bodily forms. In the representation of the durable psychic state of terror or fear maturing into aesthetic experience of horror, the transitory states to be enacted through the body or articulated in the language of poetry are fear, stupefaction, dejection, agitation, restlessness, inactivity, epilepsy, death, and so on (Bharata 1950, p. 114).

There is another class of psychic states that are ancillary to the dominant states of terror but emerge directly from reason or consciousness without the deliberation of the mind or the senses. These are termed as involuntary mental states (*sāttvika-bhāva*). These are paralysis, perspiration, loss of voice, change of color, and so on.

One of the most celebrated passages in Indian literature delineating the Horrific is the killing of Duśāsana, the second of the Kaurava brothers, by Bhīma the second of the Pāṇḍava brothers in the battle of Kurukṣetra described in the epic the *Mahābhārata* by Veda Vyāsa:

Having said this, Bhima of exceeding strength and great activity suddenly rushed, from the desire of slaying Duśāsana. Like a lion of fierce impetuosity rushing towards a mighty elephant, Vrikodara, that foremost of heroes, rushed towards Duśāsana in that battle and attacked him in the very sight of Suyodhana and Karna. Jumping down from his car, he alighted on the ground, and fixed his eyes steadfastly on his fallen foe. Drawing then his whetted sword of keen edge, and trembling with rage, he placed his foot upon the throat of Duśāsana, and ripping open the breast of his enemy stretched on the ground, quaffed his warm life-blood. Then throwing him down and cutting off, O king, with that sword the head of thy son, Bhima of great intelligence desirous of accomplishing his vow, again quaffed his enemy's blood little by little, as if for enjoying its taste. Then looking at him with wrathful eyes, he said these words, "I regard the taste of this blood of my enemy to be superior to that of my mother's milk, or honey, or clarified butter, or good wine that is prepared from honey, or excellent water, or milk, or curds, or skimmed milk, or all other kinds of drinks there are on earth that are sweet as ambrosia or nectar." Once more, Bhima of fierce deeds, his heart filled with wrath, beholding Duśāsana dead, laughed softly and said, "What more can I do to thee? Death has rescued thee from my hands." They, O king, that saw Bhimasena, while he filled with joy at having quaffed the blood of his foe, was uttering those words and stalking on the field of battle, fell down in fear. They that did not fall down at the sight, saw their weapon drop from their hands. Many, from fear, cried out feebly and looked at Bhima with half-shut eyes. Indeed, all those that stood around Bhima and beheld him drink the blood of Duśāsana, fled away, overwhelmed with fear, and saying unto one another, "This one is no human being!" (Karna Parva 1993, p. 220)

What is narrated is not only a representation of the Horrific (*bhayaṇaka rasa*) but also of the Odious (*bībhatsa rasa*), whose permanent psychological state

(*sthāyī-bhāva*) is Disgust (*jugupsā*). The narrator is Sanjaya, the counselor and charioteer of the blind Kaurava King Dhṛtaraṣṭra. He is gifted with visionary eyes by Sage Vyāsa, the meta-narrator of the epic, so that he could relate the events of the battlefield to the king whose sons, the Kauravas, are fighting a most bloody and cataclysmic battle with the army of the five Pāṇḍava brothers on whose side is lord Kṛṣṇa, the charioteer of their greatest archer and the third of the brothers Arjuna. The various determinants, such as Bhīma tearing off Duśāsana's chest and drinking his blood, the latter lying motionless with a torn chest, and the former deliciously tasting his enemy's blood, evoke both the odious and the horrific experience.

In the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Bharata mentions the Odious as complementary with the Horrific. It is the perception of the Odious that produces the Horrific; the latter is rooted in the former. The durable psychological state of the Odious, Disgust (*jugupsā*), is a different emotional state from the Terrible. But it is a difference by association, because it causes those features of the Horrific aesthetic state that make it distinct from other aesthetic states, such as the Erotic or the Marvelous. Therefore, the relation between the two *rasa*-s (aesthetic experiences) is dialectical; each sets off the other in cause and effect relationships while maintaining its features and signs separately. Each aesthetic experience has a presiding deity. The Odious and the Horrific are associated with the cosmic force of Time, as the all-powerful manifestation of the world, appearing as the final death of the creation. The colors associated with these two experiences are blue and black. Śiva, as Mahākāla (the Absolute Death), is the presiding lord of the Odious, perceived as consuming cemeteries and skeletons and so on. The presiding deity of the Horrific experience is Kāla (Death).

Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka (ninth century CE) interprets *bhayānaka* and other *rasa*-s (aesthetic experiences) as different forms of consciousness, not merely "reflective" judgments in the Kantian sense. Nāyaka's novel contribution to Indian aesthetics is his theory of *sādharnīkarāṇa* (generalization), which inaugurates a radical departure from text to the reader or spectator in the interpretation and experience of literature. The language of poetry and the human body on the stage in all its retinue of physical movement, gestures, costumes, and so on have the essential potency to generalize human experience and liberate the aesthetic situation from particular constraints of empirical experience, so that it's the pure consciousness of the reader or the spectator that relishes the meaning of the text read or performed. Contrary to Burke, the experience of *bhayānaka* is not dependent upon "the properties of things which we find by experience to influence those passions; and from a sober and attentive investigation of the laws of nature, by which those properties are capable of affecting the body, and thus of exciting our passions" (Burke 1990, p. 1).

In Kantian aesthetics, on the other hand, the self is overawed and is unable to hold on to its autonomy while facing the sublime object of nature. In his difference from Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer is very close to the Indian theory of *bhayānaka*. With the impression of nothingness that the sublime object thrusts on the self, there arises a consciousness that all the phenomena in its beautiful or sublime aspect exist only as the form of pure all-knowing self:

The vastness of the world which disquieted us before, rests now in us; our dependence upon it is annulled by its dependence on us. All this, however, does not come at once into reflection, but shows itself merely as a felt consciousness that in some sense or other (which philosophy alone can explain) we are one with the world, and therefore not oppressed, but exalted by its immensity. (Schopenhauer 1969, pp. 269–270)

Bhayānaka is pivoted upon the radical autonomy of the self as the pure form which manifests in the object and the situations that are its symbols. Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka and the Sāṅkhya philosophers hold that the self is constituted of the same three elements that inhere in all objects and beings of the universe: *sattva* (light, luminous, and pleasant), *rajaḥ* (mobile, dynamic, and painful), and *tamas* (inert, obstructive, and indifferent). The three constituents are never static and alone but always dynamic seeking to dominate one another. They are related to broadly three states of consciousness associated with the different aesthetic experiences: expansion (*vikāśa*), gained by the predominance of *sattva*; fluidity (*dhṛutī*), evoked by the contact of *sattva* and *rajaḥ*; and dilation (*viśtāra*) affected by the meeting of *sattva* and *tamas*. The self's experience of the Horrific (*bhayānaka*) is that of expansion (*vikāśa*) and is accompanied by the elements that are purely bright, light, and pleasant. Its complementary *rasa* (aesthetic experience), the Odious (*bībhatsa*), is an experience of dilation (*viśtāra*) (Gnoli 1985, p. 46).

In the aesthetic theory of Abhinavagupta, the human mind is “the organ of tasting” that savors the pure forms of consciousness. During the aesthetic experience of the Horrific, the terrifying objective situation is merely a symbol to awaken such tasting of the mind itself, which leads to the self's free realization of horror as one with itself. Horror is pleasurable, bright, and light, no matter how materially repulsive the outward object might be, because the mind in aesthetic experience, unlike life experience, is free of the obstacles of time, space, and empirical individuality and can experience Horror as a pure form of consciousness. Hence, Horror is pleasurable. It enables the radical autonomy of the self (Gnoli 1985, p. 55).

NOTE

1. The term *vibhāva* denotes an artistic, literary, or dramatic situation or event that determines the corresponding emotion in the character. However, unlike the life experiences, the relation between *vibhāva* (determinants) and the consequent speech, body movements, facial gestures, and emotion is not that of cause and effect but that of mode and the psychophysical state of being. That's why Bharata does not use the terms *kāraṇa* and *kārya* (cause and effect) in relation to art, because the relation between determining object or situation and the resultant emotion in art and literature is artificial and liberated from the limitations of empirical relations. Hence, a horrific scene produces aesthetic pleasure in the reader or the spectator.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bharata, Muni. 1950. *The Nāṭyaśāstra*. Translated by Manmohan Ghosh. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited. Originally Published Calcutta: The Royal Society of Bengal.
- Brereton, Joel P., and Stephanie W. Jamison. 2014. *The R̥gveda: Earliest Religious Poetry of India*. Vol. 2. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burke, Edmund. 1990. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Edited by Adam Phillip. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ganguli, Kisari Mohan, trans. 1993. Karna Parva. In *The Mahabharata of Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa*, vol. 3. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.
- Gnoli, Raniero. 1985. *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta*. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office.
- Kant, Immanuel. 2000. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Edited by Paul Guyer and Translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Monier-Williams, M. 2005. *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited. Originally Published Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1899.
- Müller, F. Max, trans. and ed. 2011. The Kaha Upaniṣad (II.2–3), The Taittirīyaka-Upaniṣad (II.1). In *The Upaniṣad: The Sacred Books of the East*. Delhi: Low Price Publications. Originally Published 1884.
- Pandey, K.C. 2008. *Comparative Aesthetics: Indian Aesthetics*. Vol. 1. 4th ed. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office.
- Pollock, Sheldon. 2010. What Was Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka Saying? In *Epic and Argument in Sanskrit Literary History*, ed. Sheldon Pollock. New Delhi: Manohar.
- Schopenhauer, Arthur. 1969. The World as Will and Idea. In *Philosophy of Art and Aesthetics: From Plato to Wittgenstein*, ed. Frank A. Tillman and Steven M. Cahn. New York: Happy & Row Publishers.
- Telang, Kāshinātha Trimbak, trans. 2007. *The Bhagvadgīta with the Sanatsujatiya and the Anugīta*. Vol. 8. Edited by F. Max Müller. Delhi: Low Price Publications. Originally Published 1882.
- Vatsyayan, Kapila. 2007. *Bharata: The Nāṭyaśāstra*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi. Originally Published 1996.



Horror in the Medieval North: The Troll

Ármann Jakobsson

The troll is a good example of how inseparable figures of horror are from language. Consequently, this study will be much concerned with language. The troll appears in medieval sources, such as eddas and sagas from Iceland. After the Middle Ages, it has an afterlife in folklore and folktales and, finally, in modern popular culture. However, the meaning of the term changes throughout the ages. In Iceland, a troll became a specific race of mountain-dwelling ogres, whereas, in the rest of the Nordic countries, they shrunk in size. Thus, it is of utmost importance to distinguish between medieval and modern usage of the term.

In this study, I mostly focus on medieval trolls. I begin with a case study to illuminate the uncertainty of meaning, that is, how often a particular source will not define a troll precisely enough for a modern reader to envision the creature in question. Then I turn to the usage of the troll concept in medieval sources, demonstrating that the term is very broad. Thus, the medieval troll category will include creatures that others would refer to as witches, magicians, sorcerers, ghosts, zombies, and vampires, but also possessed animals, gigantic ethnic others, and fairly undefined monsters.

In the Middle Ages, trolls were not really thought of a race or a species; that was a later development influenced by scientific taxonomy. It is also clear that being a troll was a mutable state and that actions define trolls rather than any innate nature. I will discuss some case studies that demonstrate this clearly before finally moving on to the horror function of a troll.

Á. Jakobsson (✉)
University of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland

THE AUTHOR PLAYS THE “NOBODY KNOWS” CARD

The main source for Old Norse or even Germanic mythology, Snorri Sturluson’s *Prose Edda*, likely composed early in the thirteenth century,¹ includes a short narrative of a paranormal encounter. The poet/deity Bragi the Old is traversing a forest late in the evening² when a “trollkona” addresses him (Jónsson 1931, p. 164). Their confrontation unfolds in an exchange of skaldic poetry: she announces herself a troll through a verse listing troll metaphors, and the poet responds in kind with a verse listing metaphors for poets. Salient to this study is that the trollwoman’s composition ends with the rhetorical question, “Hvat er travll nema þat?” (What is troll but that?) (Jónsson 1931, p. 165). These metaphors are singularly unhelpful to anyone who wishes to know what a troll is. The verses, much like the narrative of this encounter, do not illuminate her identity or describe her in any way. It is left to the audience to envision the troll, meaning that we have no guarantee that the entire thirteenth- and fourteenth-century audience would be in agreement about the probable appearance of this trollwoman. Even less can we assume that their vision of a trollwoman was anything like that of modern audiences who can seek pictorial representations from a variety of sources.

The brief encounter provides first questions and then answers, but the answers are not all that helpful (nor indeed the answers to any questions we might have) and leave us with yet another question: What is a troll? A scholar’s first answer would have to be that nobody knows, in particular where medieval trolls are concerned. The alluring idea of cultural continuity might tempt us to project modern images of trolls onto a medieval text whenever we stumble upon the word. This is as inadvisable as attempting to feed modern internet trolls. The texts do not give us any indication that modern troll images apply to the medieval sources. Thus, it is necessary to begin a review of the concept by a discussion of a few occurrences of the word in Old Icelandic texts of the late Middle Ages.³ I will then proceed to discuss four attested instances of the word “trollsligr” (trollish) in the Sagas of Icelanders and go on to present the two main types of medieval trolls that can be located in these sources before attempting to address the significance of the troll to the medieval audience.⁴

FIFTY SHADES OF TROLL

The medieval usage of the word troll is not clear. One of the few attestations in poetry is from the mythological poem *Völuspá* (The Sybil’s Prophecy), which may be a tenth-century text but is attested in late thirteenth-century and early fourteenth-century manuscripts, many of its verses indeed in Snorri Sturluson’s *Prose Edda*. In *Völuspá*, a wolf is referred to as a “tungls tjúgari í trolls hami” (the chewer of the moon in the guise of a troll) (Kristjánsson and Ólason 2014, pp. 301, 311, 319).⁵ Again, there is no explanation of what the guise of a troll means in this sentence, but the least complicated solution would seem to be that the wolf looks like a wolf and is yet trollish in appearance. Would this

trollish appearance indicate enormous size, frightening appearance, or magical abilities? Possibly all three. However, the *Völuspá* evidence seems to indicate that it would be a fallacy to imagine all trolls as humanoid in appearance.

There are indeed further indications in medieval sources that a troll may appear in the shape of an animal. In *Eyrbyggja saga*, the loud bellowing of a demonic bull is referred to as “trolls læti,” and *Hrólfs saga kraka* has a scene in which the king and his retainers are attacked by a hog overcome by magic and referred to as a “troll” (Sveinsson and Þórðarson 1934, p. 171; Slay 1960, p. 100). In the latter case, the word may suggest demonic possession, for the hog is no ordinary hog and yet its trollish nature does not seem to be reflected in its physical characteristics. Infused with magic by King Hrólfr’s adversary, King Aðils of Sweden, this beast is both hog and troll: a hybrid creature.

It is mainly the modern influence of scientific taxonomy, constructed and refined in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, that has created the notion that has clearly influenced many a scholar as well as the general public: that trolls are like a species of animal in that they have clear distinguishing features to help us categorize them (Jakobsson 2013). Medieval examples indicate that this is not so: a troll may resemble a hog, a calf, a wolf, or a human, and few clues point toward size or physical appearance in general being a deciding factor (Jakobsson 2008). There is also scant evidence that one of these meanings, for example, the mountain dweller or the magician, is primary and the others an analogy (Arnold 2005). What we seem to have, instead, is a broad troll concept, or perhaps “term” would be a better word since there is scant evidence of serious attempts to define what the word means.⁶ In my ensuing analysis, I will, thus, not distinguish among a magician, witch, ghost, or zombie in my own language, as all of these are parts of the medieval concept of the troll. Thus, what one might refer to as a ghost, a ghoul, and a witch are all trolls in the medieval Norse texts.

In *Eyrbyggja saga*, “trollit” is used to refer to a perfectly average woman of good family, Geirríðr Þórólfsdóttir (Sveinsson and Þórðarson 1934, p. 53). She is believed to be skilled in the use of magic and has arrived along with a lawful search party to penetrate the illusions of the criminal sorceress, Katla. This usage of the word “troll” may be of considerable significance. In some instances, apparently, the troll may look like you and me. It is its magical abilities, and possibly the willingness to use them, that sets it apart. Geirríðr is referred to as a troll by her enemy, Katla, not necessarily a reliable source because she possesses skills that others perceive as magic. The other creatures mentioned above may not be magic users themselves, but it is possible they are referred to as trolls because they are created by and imbued with magic. Like Frankenstein’s creature, referred to as “Frankenstein” for most of the twentieth century, the troll and whatever it brings forth are both subsumed under one term, “troll.” In this case, the magic that ties the necromancer and his abysmal creations is encapsulated by the word “troll,” a word intended to describe both a witch and whatever horrors she invokes.

Another notable group of trolls are the zombies frequently encountered in Old Norse sagas,⁷ often resting in their mounds but sometimes walking the earth and trying to infect others, who will become zombies (Jakobsson 2011). One such undead is Sóti the Viking, encountered by the hero Hörðr Grímkelsson in *Harðar saga*. Clearly a worthy adversary for a young ghost-buster, Sóti is described as a “mikit tröll í lífinu, en hálfu meira, síðan hann var dauðr” (great troll in life but even worse since he became dead) (Vilmundarson and Vilhjálmsson 1991, p. 39). It is not explained how Sóti was a great troll in life, but the most likely explanation is that he was a practitioner of witchcraft. Possibly for this reason, he is transformed into an undead after his demise. Sóti is, thus, representative of two of the most common classes of medieval Icelandic trolls: witches and the undead.

As illustrated by these few examples, the troll is defined by its actions, such as witchcraft or continuing to be present after death, less by what it is, but by what it does. Sóti was originally a Viking, which, in Old Norse texts, is not always a concept for a Scandinavian nautical warrior but can indeed indicate any lawless pirate, including Moors and Muslims (Jakobsson and Guðjónsson 2011, pp. 76, 80), and he has presumably turned to practicing magic already when alive. Later, he fails to die properly and becomes an undead in his mound, guided by a desire to guard his horde. Thus, he becomes an undead through narrow-minded selfish avarice, by refusing to take leave of his worldly possessions. His savage lust for dead things may be termed draconian: dragon and undead are equally reluctant to leave their worldly possessions behind.⁸

Sóti and other ghosts are hard to expel. It is, indeed, the very nature of such trolls to refuse to leave this world when their time has come. Their undead existence is selfish, since every human is allotted only a limited time in which to live and has to accept these limits, however painful the knowledge of eventual annihilation might be. The ghost breaks laws of time and space, which also happen to be economic laws, namely having to do with inheritance, since the dead ought to leave possessions and land behind for their ancestors. This the undead fiercely refuse to do. Here, one can see a congruity between the relationship ghosts share with the living and the one that older generations share with youth, the latter characterized by the older generation's reluctance to allow youth to assume control, bringing to mind issues that generations of humans have had to face with the inevitability of aging.

BEING TROLLISH

Keeping in mind that a troll is defined by its actions, such as witchcraft or refusing to die, it may be useful to note how the word “trollsligr” (trollish) is used in the Sagas of Icelanders. The four major examples, from *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Vatnsdæla saga*, *Kjalnesinga saga*, and *Njáls saga*, each accentuate the multitude of medieval Icelandic trollishness. In *Eyrbyggja saga*, the undead Þórólfr Twistfoot is exhumed and his corpse is described as “inn trollsligsti” to look at, black as Hell and bloated as a bull (Sveinsson and Þórðarson 1934, p. 169).⁹

The ordinary men exhuming him provide the point of view, and the bloated body they see is, to them, both demonic and bestial. Thus, the troll comes to mind as a handy metaphor. Presumably, they sense magic in the air: some forces at work that can be regarded as neither ordinary nor miraculous. This particular corpse already has an illustrious career behind him as the walking dead, a category of troll in medieval Iceland and perhaps the most common troll. In the nineteenth century, Icelandic folklorists distinguished among magic stories, troll stories, and ghost stories (Árnason 1862).¹⁰ In *Eyrbyggja saga*, the ghost is a troll fuelled by magic. The word “trollsligr” can, thus, be glossed as: “ghostly and magical.”

Magic is also present in the depiction of the witch, Ljót, who is an important hostile force in *Vatnsdæla saga*. Her “trolldómr” or magic has already been noted but, in her last run, she is caught with her clothes drawn from her nether region as she approaches with her (presumably bare) behind aimed forward and her head between her legs. Her gaze is described in a laconic way well known from the sagas as “ófagrligt” (not pretty), and her eyes are “trollsliga skotit” (pointed trollishly) (Sveinsson 1939, p. 70). It is revealed that Ljót is preparing a powerful spell; her topsy-turvy stance is demonic, with the arse in this case and many others being the abode of the infernal.¹¹ Though she is a witch, Ljót is human and lives and works among other humans of the region. Thus, her trollish gaze is not necessarily indicative of bestiality or the fact that she is of a different race. The trollish gaze is magical, which makes her different enough, but the opposition is not human/inhuman. Like Geirríður, Ljót is being perceived as a person of magic, thus a troll.

A third example of the use of “trollsligr” is a *blámaðr* in *Kjalnesinga saga*. The term would seem to denote a race, African, but the *blámenn* of the sagas are first and foremost monsters against whom the protagonists are pitched in an uneven battle they are not supposed to be able to win.¹² They have to be restrained by many men as they bellow and act “trollsliga” (Halldórsson 1959, p. 36). In this case, the trollish behavior is bestial fury, unexplained and, thus, possibly believed to be created by magic. Certainly, the *blámenn* are no mere ethnic Others, for their trollish behavior indicates that they are only partly human. “Monstrous” would not be a bad gloss from “trollsliga” in this instance. The terrible trollishness of the *blámaðr* is almost beyond human comprehension, and, thus, magic is not an unlikely source for it.

Despite their horrible appearance, Þórólfr, Ljót, and the *blámaðr* are all humanoid in some way. The last instance of the word is its usage about a positive character in the saga and reminds us that trollishness is in the eye of the beholder. Terrible though the ghost, the witch, and the *blámaðr* undoubtedly are, it is still others who see them as trollish and designate them so. In the fourth and last instance, it is a magnate at the *alþing* of Iceland, indeed the law-speaker himself, Skapti Þóróddsson, the sole legal functionary of Iceland in the Commonwealth era¹³ and a good as representative of Civilization as anybody in Iceland, who sees the heroic and valiant, albeit mischievous, Skarphéðinn Njálsson and calls him “trollsligr” (Sveinsson 1954, p. 298). The saga audience

will know that Skarphéðinn is no troll, as he is not evil and does not practice magic, yet it is revealed that one man's hero may be another man's troll, a scene perhaps typical of this most complex and insightful of all sagas.¹⁴ With this word, Skapti reveals that, to him, Skarphéðinn is terrible and possibly other-worldly. As in the first three examples, trollishness is in the eye of the beholder, but, in this instance, the audience is not expected to take it for granted. Not all statements by saga characters can be taken at face value, and there is considerable room for doubt about what is trollish and what a troll is.

THE ZOMBIE AND THE WITCH

As the above discussion may already have revealed, the two major medieval Icelandic trolls are the undead and the sorcerous. Later, in particular in the early modern age right up until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the most common image of the troll in Iceland becomes a hairy brutish ogre in the wilderness, whereas, in postmedieval Scandinavia, trolls diminish in size and destructivity (Lindow 2014, pp. 52–55). In the end, as humans think even more in terms of races and species, trolls end up as more or less a different species, relegated to the mountains and the wilderness. In the medieval sources, they walk among us and are defined more by their actions than by size or looks or any external factors.

A notorious practitioner of “trollskapr” is the witch Þorgrímr the Nose in *Gísla saga Súrssonar*. Þorgrímr is recruited by the enemies of the protagonist Gísli to perform a magic ritual to curse him. This magic is not described in detail, but we are assured that it is performed “fjolkynngiliga með allri ergi ok skelmiskap” (with the deviancy and debauchery of a sorceress) (Þórólfsson and Jónsson 1943, pp. 56–57). Every term used here is ambiguous and worthy of further study, but only later in the saga is it mentioned that Þorgrímr also performed “trollskapr” in the ritual (Þórólfsson and Jónsson 1943, p. 69). The audience is left to ponder the exact nature of the wickedness, deviancy, and debauchery in the ritual, but the word “trollskapr” seems to signify its magical qualities. Þorgrímr is a witch, a necromancer, and that makes him a troll, his action trollish, his performance trollery. As a sorcerer, Þorgrímr is a prime example of the medieval Icelandic troll. He walks among us and can be killed, indeed he is killed a short while later in the saga, and what powers he has come from his knowledge of obscene and wicked magic rituals. In those unspecified actions, the troll is made.

Another good example of the medieval troll is Ögmundr, the prime antagonist of the hero, Örvar-Oddr, in *Örvar-Odds saga*. Ögmundr turns out to be an undead, whose evil originates in sorcery. He has learned witchcraft and illusions from an early age living with the distant race of the Permians. Later, there is a pagan ritual in which they “blótuðu ... hann, ok trýldu hann svá, at hann var engum menskum manni líkr” (worshipped him and en-trolled him so that he became unlike any human being), and, after this, people believed that he should “heldr kallast andi enn maður” (rather be called a spirit than a human)

(Rafn 1829, pp. 242–243).¹⁵ “Trylla” (en-troll) and “trylldr” (en-trolled) are two further forms of medieval Icelandic terminology, suggesting the permutability of trolls, of which Ögmundr is a case in point.

In the beginning, he is human, but he has undergone a (largely unspecified) ritual that seems to have transferred him from one state of being to another. There is no mention of his dying in the process, but it is suggested in the saga that, after the transformation, he cannot be considered a human any longer and that he cannot die. He admits that he is inhuman—“nú emk eigi síðr andi enn maðr” (now I am no less a spirit than a man)—and states that “ek væra dauðr, ef ek hefði eðli til þess” (I would be dead if it were in my nature) (Rafn 1829, p. 252). Ögmundr is depicted as “svartr ok blár” (black and blue), a description which parallels that of many Icelandic ghosts, including the depiction of Þórólfr Twistfoot, referred to earlier.

Ögmundr is never directly referred to as a ghost or zombie (with the term *aptrganga*),¹⁶ but there is mention of *fjandr* and *troll* (devils and trolls) in various versions of the saga (Rafn 1829, pp. 208, 534). He is a spirit, *andi*, and there is strong evidence that we should count him among the undead. He has been reanimated like a revenant, and it is stated that he cannot die—perhaps because he cannot be counted among the living any more, thus making the conflict between him and Oddr a duel of the quick and the dead. It is left to the audience of *Örvir-Odds saga* to categorize Ögmundr more precisely. The harder it is to classify or name a monster, the more powerful it often becomes.

Porgrímr and Ögmundr, witch and zombie, epitomize the medieval Icelandic troll in their own ways. The “trollskapr” is characterized first and foremost by magic and sorcery, and the undead are the most prominent representatives of a troll to the medieval Icelandic.

THE EYE OF THE GHOUL

The role of Porgrímr the Nose and Ögmundr is indicative of the function of the troll in a medieval Icelandic narrative. The troll is the enemy. It persecutes and haunts. It is a bogeyman hunting the protagonist and is nigh impossible to escape.¹⁷ The wicked Glámr, the vampire slain by Iceland’s most heroic ghost-buster Grettir the Strong after a prolonged fight that would fit well into the finale of a modern horror film, curses Grettir with his dying words, ensuring that, although the ghoul himself is laid to rest, his eyes stay with Grettir and haunt him to his dying day (Jónsson 1936, pp. 118–123, 123, 222). Grettir cannot escape this fiend: he has essentially sacrificed himself to lay the vampire to rest, but this victory signifies his own end. Thus, the vampire slayer does not escape his defeated enemy.

No trollish image from the sagas is more haunting than the eyes of Glámr, ensuring that Grettir is ever after deprived of restful sleep. The eyes of the ghoul stand in for our fears and discomforts that keep us awake at night. The troll is inseparable from the horror it brings; they are one and the same. Thus, the leading character in a troll story is never the troll but always the human,

whose horror the troll story is really about. Glámr can be vanquished, but his eyes remain with Grettir as an internal rather than an external danger. Thus, the medieval trolls and bogeymen prey on us because they embody what we fear: our mortality and insignificance.

NOTES

1. The *Prose Edda* (*Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*) exists in four main manuscripts (the Regius, Wormianus, Trecht (Trajectinus), and Uppsala versions) and some medieval fragments, dissimilar enough for scholars to speak of versions. Thus, there is no absolute certainty as to the precise content of the original Edda of the learned magnate Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241), presumably composed around c. 1220. All the manuscripts are copies, and the Edda is only attributed to Snorri in one version, the Uppsala tradition from the early fourteenth century. This is still the most reliable attribution of any medieval text to Snorri. On the disputed origins of the Edda and the different versions, see, for example, Sävborg (2012, 2013), Pálsson (2015).
2. “þa er hann oc vm skog nokqvorn sið um qveld.” The complete version of this anecdote, with the verse of the trollwoman, is only in the Regius and AM 748 II manuscripts. In *Snorra-Edda*, there are two characters called Bragi, a skaldic poet from the ninth century and one of the Norse deities. It is perfectly possible that these are the same, and Bragi the poet became a god after his death. See Lindow (2006). The actual evidence of any pagan cult of Bragi is very thin, and it may even be a post-pagan idea that this deity was ever venerated, although he is mentioned in skaldic poetry traditionally believed to be from the Viking Age (though extant only in manuscripts from the thirteenth century and later).
3. No Icelandic prose texts exist from before 1120, Ari the Learned’s *Íslendingabók* being the oldest, and the entire medieval corpus of Iceland, thus, consists of high medieval and late medieval texts. The composition of sagas seems to gain ground in the thirteenth century and bloom in the fourteenth century. Thus, it is useful for medievalists to think of Old Norse texts as predominantly late medieval and think primarily of the fourteenth century, although the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries are also important periods of saga writing.
4. Some of the observations made in this short review are presented at greater length in Jakobsson (2017).
5. This verse is found in all three major versions of the poem: *Konungsbók*, *Hauksbók*, and *Snorra-Edda*. Most of the medieval sources referred to in this chapter (all categorized as sagas save this one poem) are from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but I will not go into detail as to their exact age; it is sufficient to state that the trolls of this study are horrors of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Iceland, although the term survived for centuries longer.
6. One such attempt may be found in *Bárðar saga*, in which trolls are clearly regarded as separate from risar (giants) and said to be hostile and strong, whereas the giants are large, fair, and friendly. See Vilmundarson and Vilhjálmsón (1991, pp. 101–102).
7. “Saga” is normally used to refer to any kind of prose narrative from medieval Iceland, including romances and hagiography, but the examples discussed here

are mostly from the Sagas of Icelanders (*Íslendingasögur*) and the legendary sagas (*fornaldarsögur*), two literary genres originating in the thirteenth century but thriving in the fourteenth and even fifteenth centuries. The Sagas of Icelanders take place mostly in Iceland, but the legendary sagas take place in the North outside Iceland.

8. On the avarice of the undead, see Hume (1980, pp. 13–14).
9. After numerous attempts to get rid of this evil spirit, Þórólfr Twistfoot seems to eventually end up inside the demonic calf Glæsir (the same bull referred to as a troll, not surprisingly since the undead and the calf are essentially the same evil spirit), which kills its owner Þóróddr, thus finally bringing the unrest caused by Þórólfr to an end (Sveinsson and Þórðarson 1934, pp. 175–176). Possibly the “bull” metaphor is a warning about this.
10. The first three categories in the collection were theological tales (*goðfræðissögur*, mostly tales of elves and ogres referred to as trolls), ghost stories (*draugasögur*), and stories of witchcraft and magic (*galdrasögur*). The taxonomy employed in this volume was not of Jón Árnason’s creation but was rather conceived by German scholar Maurer and slightly modified by Jón himself.
11. The relationship between the infernal nature of the demonic and the rear end of humanity has been explored by Erlingsson (1994).
12. The monstrous blámenn have recently been explored by Vídalín (2017).
13. In medieval Iceland, before the end of the so-called Commonwealth era in 1262–1264, there was no state, and the only functionary was the law-speaker at the general parliament (*alþingi*), the “attorney general,” an office held by Skapti Þóróddsson (d. 1030) for a long while in the early eleventh century.
14. On the complex attitudes to politics, gender, and language in this particular saga, see Jakobsson (2007).
15. There are two versions of this saga, and, in the second version, Ögmundr becomes more prominent than in the first, in which he is only mentioned in one chapter, possibly a demonstration of the allure of the monster to a late medieval audience. Tulinius (2002) has suggested that, in the saga, Ögmundr is symbolic for death and that the emphasis on him may reflect the importance of death in the world-view of people in the fifteenth century, following the plague (pp. 163–164).
16. “Aptrganga” is one of the more frequent terms for the undead in the sagas. However, it never refers directly to a being (an *aptrganga*), as it may in modern Icelandic, but rather always to hauntings (*aptrgöngur*) of the undead. Thus, this term signifies the actions of the troll rather than whatever being held responsible for them.
17. Warner phrases it elegantly: “Bogeys make present what we dread” (1998, p. 382).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Árnason, Jón, ed. 1862. *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og æfintýri*. Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs.
- Arnold, Martin. 2005. Hvat er Tröll nema Pat?: The Cultural History of the Troll. In *The Shadow-Walkers: Jacob Grimm’s Mythology of the Monstrous*, ed. Tom Shippey, 111–155. Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies.
- Erlingsson, Davíð. 1994. Frá hrópi til saurs, allrar veraldar vegur. *Árbók Hins íslenska fornleifafélags* 91: 137–148.

- Halldórsson, Jóhannes, ed. 1959. *Kjalnesinga saga, Íslenzk fornrit XIV*. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag.
- Hume, Kathryn. 1980. From Saga to Romance: The Use of Monsters in Old Norse Literature. *Studies in Philology* 77: 1–25.
- Jakobsson, Ármann. 2007. Masculinity and Politics in Njáls saga. *Viator* 38: 191–215.
- . 2008. The Trollish Acts of Þorgrímr the Witch: The Meanings of Troll and Ergi in Medieval Iceland. *Saga-Book* 32: 39–68.
- . 2011. Vampires and Watchmen: Categorizing the Mediaeval Icelandic Undead. *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 110: 281–300.
- . 2013. The Taxonomy of the Non-Existent: Some Medieval Icelandic Concepts of the Paranormal. *Fabula* 54: 199–213.
- . 2017. *The Troll Inside You: Paranormal Activity in the Medieval North*. Brooklyn: Punctum.
- Jakobsson, Ármann, and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson, eds. 2011. *Morkinskinna, Íslenzk fornrit XXIV*. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag.
- Jónsson, Finnur, ed. 1931. *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*. Copenhagen: Gyldendal.
- Jónsson, Guðni, ed. 1936. *Grettis saga, Íslenzk fornrit VII*. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag.
- Kristjánsson, Jónas, and Vésteinn Ólason, eds. 2014. *Eddukvæði, Íslenzk fornrit*. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag.
- Lindow, John. 2006. Narrative Worlds, Human Environments, and Poets: The Case of Bragi. In *Old Norse Religion in Long-Term Perspectives: Origins, Changes, and Interactions*, ed. Anders Andrén, Kristina Jennbert, and Catharina Raudvere, 21–25. Lund: Nordic Academic Press.
- . 2014. *Trolls: An Unnatural History*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Pálsson, Heimir. 2015. *Bók þessi heitir Edda: Uppsálagarö Snorra-Eddu*. Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan.
- Rafn, C.C., ed. 1829. Örvar-Odds saga. In *Fornaldar sögur Norðrlanda, II*, 143–254. Copenhagen: Prentadar í Enni Poppsku prentsmidju.
- Sävborg, Daniel. 2012. Blockbildningen i Codex Upsaliensis: En ny metod att lösa frågan om Snorra Eddas ursprungsversion. *Maal og minne* 1: 12–53.
- . 2013. Snorra Edda and the Uppsala Edda. In *Snorri Sturluson – Historiker, Dichter, Politiker*, ed. Heinrich Beck, Wilhelm Heizmann, and Jan Alexander van Nahl, 247–266. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.
- Slay, Desmond, ed. 1960. *Hrólfs saga kraka, Editiones Arnarnagæanæ B I*. Copenhagen: Munksgaard.
- Sveinsson, Einar Ólafur, ed. 1939. *Vatnsdæla saga, Íslenzk fornrit VIII*. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag.
- . 1954. *Brennu-Njáls saga, Íslenzk fornrit XII*. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag.
- Sveinsson, Einar Ólafur, and Matthías Þórðarson, eds. 1934. *Eyrbyggja saga, Íslenzk fornrit IV*. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag.
- Tulinius, Torfi H. 2002. *The Matter of the North: The Rise of Literary Fiction in Thirteenth-Century Iceland*. Translated by Randi C. Eldevik. Odense: Odense University Press.
- Vidalín, Arngrímur. 2017. *Skuggsjá sjálfsins: Skrímsl, jöðrun og afmennskun í lerdómshéð íslenskra sagnaritara 1100–1550*. Unpublished PhD-thesis. Reykjavík: Háskóli Íslands.

- Vilmundarson, Þórhallur, and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, eds. 1991. *Harðar saga, Íslensk fornrit XIII*. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag.
- Warner, Marina. 1998. *No Go the Bogeyman: Scaring, Lulling and Making Mock*. London: Vintage.
- Þórólfsson, Björn Karel, and Guðni Jónsson, eds. 1943. *Gísla saga, Íslensk fornrit VI*. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag.



CHAPTER 4

The Horror Genre and Aspects of Native American Indian Literature

Joy Porter

Horror has been and remains a fundamental means whereby settler communities across the globe have dealt psychologically with the fact that they have dispossessed others of their land and resources. It has also been a means whereby the dispossessed have written themselves back into important narratives with intercultural purchase and developed and perpetuated vital elements within Indigenous cultures across generations. With its potential for catharsis and the management of fear, horror is a significant mode of communication for what cannot otherwise easily be referred to or collectively reckoned with. Furthermore, in relation to critical discourse, attempts to understand the American obsession with Native peoples as objects of spectral fear have produced some of the very best twentieth-century writing on the American condition.¹ The following analysis of aspects of horror authored by Euro-American and Native American voices shines a spotlight on the importance of perspectives on the past within the genre. It argues that, until Indigenous horror develops in new, discrete, and self-contained directions, American horror is likely to retain fundamental links to the nation's history of violent dispossession and imposed cultural dominance.

Since so much about horror concerns itself with the dead, the undead, and the life of the spirit, it is perhaps best to think of Native American Indian relationships to the horror genre as another facet of the long-running *Spirit Wars* that Ronald Niezen identified as intimately connected with the process of American nation building. Things Indian remain so often at the heart of American understandings of horror because the battle for spiritual as well as

J. Porter (✉)
University of Hull, Hull, UK

territorial control over American soil has never ended. The legacy of Indian loss, of people, land, resources, and freedoms persists. Disease, wars against Indigenous peoples, and destruction of their means of subsistence took Indian numbers, using conservative estimates, from over 5 million in 1492 to around 250,000 in the decade of 1890. This stark truth, however settler American individuals reconcile with it personally or collectively, keeps resurfacing, not least because Indian numbers since the 1890s have continued to grow, and Indian ethnicity today is now one of the fastest growing within the United States (Thornton 1987, p. 43).²

Even so, because horror is a genre, it is important to keep in mind its inherent limits. It exists within a specific matrix of cultural meaning dominated in the main by non-Indigenous forces who influence its production and reception. The messages it transmits about loss and the potential for subaltern retribution are corralled within a narrative and literary context that is, in an originary sense, non-Indigenous, despite the fact that a variety of Indigenous horror practitioners have done much to indigenize the form. Horror, at least as it is conventionally understood, is the West's favored way of frightening itself, a game that is ultimately conservative and reassuring since the parameters are established by the genre at the outset. True "horror" would, in fact, self-destruct; it would require the paradigm to be unseated, its language and semiotic register to alter, and the category to dissolve. What is really frightening, after all, is when horror breaks free of the shackles of its genre, when it leaves the realm of the imagination and confronts us in its *actualité*. In sum, horror as a genre is restrained by context—by the imagination, and, as such, it presents the comforting myth that whatever terrors it conjures are controllable. That is, it reassures us that fear has limits and that horror can only ever be as frightening as the genre allows it to be.

Despite appearances, ghosts and their ilk work to assuage our conscious or unconscious fear of death because their presence testifies to an existence that persists beyond the material life of the body. In the Western literary tradition, we can trace a need for this reassurance that there is an afterlife and that there is meaning beyond our comprehension back at least as far as Book XI of Homer's poetic *Odyssey*, where Odysseus travels to the Underworld to meet shades of the dead who drink blood, foretell the future, speak the truth, and warn the living about death's finality. This is one beginning of the fundamental relationship between ghosts, horror, and truth-telling, the latter the imperative of the story-teller and poet since the earliest records. Again in 360 B.C.E., there is Plato's depiction in *Phaedo* of hideous ghosts unnaturally deformed by trauma and, as such, unable to move on fully to death, the next spiritual state. Today we remain fascinated by the apparitions conjured by Renaissance theater, by the ghosts of Banquo, Caesar, and King Hamlet, who speak to us about the need for restorative justice and about our ultimate powerlessness in the face of all that we do not know or understand. To use the language of the younger Hamlet, that emblematic lost soul in a corrupt world, ghosts are a reminder of all that is "not dreamt of in our philosophy" (I.v. 167–168).³

Horror, monsters, ghosts, and the uncanny are deeply political imaginative forces. Sigmund Freud took our understanding of this truth-telling purpose within horror to a new level in his 1919 essay, "Das Unheimliche/The Uncanny." His influence has been such that it is now hard not to understand Western ghosts, horror, and the uncanny as functioning at least in part as he suggested. He argued that we create stories that conjure horror because we seek to bring into consciousness our repressed or unconscious fears. The fear we most repress so that we can function day to day is that of our own impending death, along with a constellation of stickier, unedifying truths that often only the dead are at liberty to articulate.

Ghosts and the horror they invoke have another important role: they serve to warn us of our own inter-relational powers, of the fact that what we dream could, in fact, become real and take on a meaningful life of its own. Awareness of such aesthetic mimesis reached a peak in sixteenth-century Europe. At this point in history, fictional or imaginary concepts, such as the joint-stock corporation, began to demonstrate that they had the ability to assume real power and a specific corporate identity of their own. An example was the East India Company's exercise of sovereign authority over hundreds of millions of people for a century after 1757. Such new artificial entities were not ghosts but shared some of their attributes. They did not have a natural, material being but had been conjured by men into social and international existence and, thereafter, took on unprecedented power. Today, the specter of the corporation continues to frighten as the world struggles to reconcile the metaphysical and material capabilities of these man-made inventions.⁴

Whatever we fear, whether it is death or external or self-generated monsters who may bring death or make us face the unknown, our conscious selves generally wish fear to disappear. The urge to destroy what resides in this category is a primary historical force. The only way beyond it is to supplant or remove the sense of duality between the self and what is feared. The abiding value of horror literature, therefore, is the extent to which it helps in this process. Some or all of the above may of course have pertained for generations in diverse Indigenous contexts, but the larger fact remains that non-Indigenous forces have shaped the horror genre and continue to dominate key aspects of its production and reception.

HORRIBLE, FANTASTIC INDIANS

American Indian peoples have long had special purchase in relation to the constellation of things that frighten and/or titillate Euro-Americans. Knowledge of their presence fundamentally contradicted European Biblical narratives of the past, and profound cultural incomprehension plagued Native-non-Native interactions. Prior to 1492, Europeans had already put much effort into imagining Indigenous peoples, and they enforced aspects of what they imagined for centuries afterward, despite repeated evidence to the contrary. The tip of this iceberg is the existence and persistence of the name *Indian* as a collective

descriptor for the diverse set of Indigenous cultures associated with the Americas, not one of whom used the term. Introduced by Columbus in his letter of 1493, *Indian* has since been reinscribed and adopted by many Native peoples, but its initial use in the Americas was a symptom of a colonial imperative to homogenize and make Other peoples whom Europe was determined to dispossess. Those who lived east of the river Indus were deemed *los Indios* and considered surely to be fantastical and a repository of all that Europe was not.

The Arawak peoples, whom Columbus first encountered, found it best to placate this need in their new European “younger brothers” by repeatedly assuring them that the amazing wonders they lusted after were just over the next horizon. By the time he reached the north coast of Cuba, Columbus had better luck. He was told of “men with one eye, and others with dogs’ noses, who ate men, and that when they took a man, they cut off his head and drank his blood and castrated him” (Columbus 1930, pp. 236, 238). Better yet, in Haiti, he learned of “people who had one eye in the forehead.” When Columbus did not find the fantastical as anticipated, he consoled his readers back home with tales of Indian cannibalism, writing:

In these islands I have so far found no human monstrosities, as many expected, but on the contrary the whole population is very well formed... Thus I have found no monsters, nor had any report of any, except in an island “Carib,” which is the second at the coming into the Indies, and which is inhabited by a people who are regarded in all the islands as very fierce and who eat human flesh. (Columbus 1930, p. 200)

Lest we think that such a thirst for the fantastic was a peculiarity of the Spanish, consider the reports within *Sphaera Mundi* (1498 edition), within which the probably English scholar John of Holywood wrote of New World peoples being “blue in colour with square heads” (as cited in Robe 1972, p. 44).

Fantastic levels of Indigenous nakedness, female guilelessness, sexual abandon, and cannibalistic rapaciousness became a regular feature within early reports. Amerigo Vespucci, who gave the Americas their new name, described Indian women in his highly influential *Mundus Novus* (1504–1505), as “being very lustful,” so much so that they “cause[d] the private parts of their husbands to swell up to such a huge size that they appear deformed and disgusting” (Northrup 1916). He dwelt in detail on the shape of Indian women’s breasts, on their supposed excessive desire to copulate with Christians, and claimed that Indian sexual abandon mirrored a total lack of Native capability for government. Furthermore, Vespucci noted, “human flesh is a common article of diet with them. Nay be assured of this fact because the father has already been seen to eat children and wife, and I knew a man whom I also spoke to who was reputed to have eaten more than three hundred human bodies” (Northrup 1916).⁵

Such reports of horrific transgression were an enabling fantasy, an inversion of the rape, slavery, and forcible extraction of the value possessed by Indigenous peoples that were carried out by Columbus and other colonizers who followed

him. For the Powhatan-Delaware writer Jack Forbes, the rape carried out by the earliest colonizers was symptomatic of a wider psychosocial condition that he considers endemic to Western culture, a disease called *wétiko* (cannibal) psychosis or windigo (Ojibway). Forbes takes his use of the term from the Cree who use it to denote “an evil person or spirit who terrorizes other creatures by means of terrible evil acts, including cannibalism” (Forbes 1992, p. 33). Such psychosis “includes, or is closely intertwined with, sexual abnormality and also a hatred for, and aggressive attitudes towards, women” (p. 98).⁶

For Forbes, as for a number of other writers on Indigenous themes across disciplines, the greatest horrors within American history by a significant measure were carried out, not by Indian peoples, but rather by successive generations of colonizing and enslaving forces. The record of Indian violence, warfare, and spiritual agency against settlers is extensive; however, settler horrors against Native men, women, and children, against Native environments and the animals therein and against Native spiritual and material cultures were perpetuated on a scale and with a transregional and transtemporal consistency of approach that surpassed Indian capabilities. This is not the message to be found within prize-winning bestsellers, such as Steven Pinker’s *The Better Angels of Our Nature: The Decline of Violence in History and Its Causes* (2011). Here, a Panglossian picture is presented, detailing how “the civilizing process” has caused violence to decline worldwide since the discovery of settled agriculture some 10,000 years ago. To make his case, Pinker closely defined violence as sudden and violent death, adjusted the statistics selected to a twentieth-century base, and ignored the complexity of the violence carried out against “non-state” peoples in the past. Within the United States, this included the deliberate destruction of the animals, flora, and fauna needed for Indigenous subsistence and/or denial through forced migration of access to that means of subsistence. We are forced to recognize that violence, like horror, is relative. It has always been dependent upon the perspective of those who define it.

As conquest, displacement, and settlement developed, Native Americans retained a central role within Euro-American depictions of horror. The Indian occupied much the same imaginative space as the wilderness, the place where Jesus had been at a remove from God and tempted sorely by the Devil. Unblessed by Christian benediction, the very existence of the “savage” Indian contradicted the Bible’s teaching. She represented the enchanted, pagan world that Christian Europe had struggled to disavow and eradicate over generations. Like European pagans, she was at ease in the woods rather than the relatively treeless enclosed fields favored by English settlers, who preferred exclusive ownership of territory so as to farm sheep and pigs. The woods also favored Indian ambush and the “skulking” way of war that so terrified Euro-Americans (Malone 1993). An American dread of woodland is discernible within a series of early records and persists today in the steady outpouring of horror narratives that end in woods and in proximity to things Indian. The 1999 film, *The Blair Witch Project*, is a commercially successful example. Despite almost no plot, it was able to imbue a tree-filled area, twigs, and an approximation of an

Indigenous spirit bundle with “horror.” Such fear links back to an imagined understanding of American land developed by settlers who wrote and spoke repeatedly of an invented binary division between “the Woods” and “the Inhabited Part of the Country.” Examples include a 1681 record from William Penn’s cousin, who grumbled that Pennsylvania would be “a fine country if it were not so overgrown with woods,” and Penn’s son who fretted in 1734 “the Woods are dark and thick” (as quoted in Scharf and Westcott 1884, p. 129; Merrell 1999, pp. 24–25). Such thinking, part of what Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra calls “a shared demonological discourse,” was a recurrent settler theme and linked Iberian and Puritan understandings of what they were doing on North and South American soil. The notion that America was a lapsed paradise where Satan held sway and that it was in need of Christian redemption through destruction was a significant element within European colonization (Cañizares-Esguerra 2006, p. 33).

Captivity narratives, among the earliest American literary efforts, portrayed Indian peoples as the epitome of the ungovernable wildness inherent within American woods. The narrative of the seventeenth-century goodwife, Mary Rowlandson, characterized Indigenous peoples as godless, crazed demons devoid of strategic sense, spiritual understanding, or martial convention. Rowlandson’s description of being taken in a raid during Metacom’s (King Philip’s) War in 1676 was one of America’s first widely distributed, culturally influential texts, and it served to invert the wider truth of brutal, pervasive Puritan violence against Native peoples.⁷ In its place, it embedded a series of stubborn tropes about settler innocence. Rowlandson portrayed herself as a lamb among ravening wolves, bereft, in a landscape of fear. Her description of her experiences across eleven weeks after an attack by Narragansett, Wampanoag, and Nashaway Indians reads like a modern-day zombie story. She wrote of these Indian peoples as “barbarous creatures,” “heathen,” “ravenous beasts,” and “hellhounds” and described their remorseless (but efficient) militarily takeover of Lancaster, Massachusetts, as follows:

There were five Persons taken in one House, the Father, and the Mother, and a sucking child they knock’d on the head; the other two they took and carried away alive. There were two others, who being out of their Garrison upon some occasion, were set upon; one was knock’d on the head, the other escaped. Another there was who was running along was shot and wounded, and fell down; he begged of them his Life, promising them money (as they told me); but they would not harken to him but knock’d him on the head and stripped him naked, and split open his Bowels. Another seeing many of the *Indians* about his Barn, ventured and went out, but was quickly shot down. There were three others belonging to the same garrison who were killed. The *Indians* getting up upon the Roof of the Barn, had advantage to shoot down upon their Fortification. Thus these murtherous Wretches went on, burning and destroying before them. [...] One of my elder sister’s children (named William) had then his leg broke, which the Indians perceiving, they knocked him on the head. Thus were we butchered by those merciless heathens, standing amazed, with the blood running down to

our heels. My eldest sister being yet in the house, and seeing those woeful sights, the infidels hailing mothers one way and children another, and some wallowing in their blood; and her eldest son telling her that her son William was dead, and myself was wounded, she said, and “Lord let me die with them:” which was no sooner said but she was struck with a bullet, and fell down dead over the threshold. (Rowlandson 1952, pp. 118–121)

In part, Mrs Rowlandson’s story was popular because, as its pages unfolded, there was always the possibility that the heroine might be sexually ravished, in keeping with long-held Euro-American imaginings. However, as the goodwife herself admitted of her captors, “not one of them ever offered the least abuse of unchastity to me in words or action” (Rowlandson 1952, p. 342). As the captivity narrative genre developed, this sexual subtext increasingly took center stage until it dominated in publications such as Sarah F. Wakefield’s 1864 volume set in Dakota, *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees: A Narrative of Indian Captivity* (1997). In time, the captivity genre became preposterous and its propagandistic and commercial attributes more obvious. The fear/desire complex within Rowlandson’s story has also been skillfully unpicked by the contemporary Chippewa writer Louise Erdrich in her poem, “Captivity” (2004). Erdrich’s poem was prompted by a line in Rowlandson’s narrative in which she admitted her fear that, through sharing an Indian man’s gift of food, she might become enchanted by him. Rowlandson wrote, “He (my captor) gave me a biscuit which I put in my pocket, and not daring to eat it, buried it under a log, fearing he had put something in it to make me love him” (Erdrich 2004, p. 342). The goodwife was reduced to puppy-like irrationality, fearful of both the power of Indian enchantment and of her own desire. Such ambivalence has remained a horror genre mainstay linking Rowlandson to innumerable subsequent American stories. One recent example is the sexual allure of the shape-shifting werewolves and vampires who repeatedly captured or entrapped the innocent townsfolk of Bon Temps within the popular *The True Blood* Novels by Charlaine Harris from 2001 to 2014.

A horror of Indian warfare can be said to be constitutive of the United States as a political entity since it was inscribed within the Declaration of Independence, drafted in June 1776. It accused George III of bringing to bear upon the inhabitants of the frontiers, “the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare, is undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions” (Ford 1904, p. 209). This was partly geopolitical rhetoric, but it also spoke to a key aspect of Euro-American self-definition, where incidents of Indian violence were used to justify rebellion against the mother country and ongoing massive retaliation against Indian peoples.

Horror about Indians also remained constitutive of American literature as it developed. From the eighteenth century, Indian ghosts, like other ghosts, increasingly became inhabitants and products of the mind rather than exterior entities. Charles Brockden Brown’s 1799 novel, *Edgar Huntly*, had dumb, threatening, brooding Indigenous shadows. James Fenimore Cooper’s titillat-

ing, well-known novel, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1827), presented death as preferable for a European woman if the alternative was the horror of possession by the vengeful Iroquois figure, Magua. Washington Irving's writings protested too much that the Indian would "vanish like vapor" and, henceforth, exist only in the imagination (Irving 1983, p. 57). Samuel Woodworth's novel, *The Champion of Freedom, or, the Mysterious Chief* (1818), turned an Indian spirit into George Washington, so absolving Americans of all guilt for the theft of Indian land. Nathaniel Hawthorne's story, "The Seven Vagabonds" (1833), had a central character who was a ghost-like Penobscot, while his unforgettable central character Hester Prynne, in the novel *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), is identified explicitly with "moral wilderness" and "the wild Indian in his woods" (Hawthorne 1983, p. 290).

Fear of Indian vengeance and a dread of the revivification of the legions of Indian dead remains a central trope within the stories America tells itself. One point of origin for this is the Ghost Dance, a Native revitalization movement that, from 1889, was practiced throughout the West and that sprang from the vision of a Northern Paiute named Wovoka (later called Jack Wilson). Wovoka held that by dancing the Ghost Dance, Native peoples could reunite the living with the spirits of the dead, and together they could work as one to make the non-Indian invader depart. The practice of Ghost Dancing became clandestine after the massacre of 150 Lakota at Wounded Knee Creek in 1890. However, the non-Indigenous fear that Indian peoples might somehow find a way to draw upon the combined forces of their dead has not gone away.

We might consider in this regard the haunted hotel in Stanley Kubrick's film adaptation of Stephen King's *The Shining*, King's *Pet Sematary* (1983), and the *Poltergeist* films. Such horror capitalized upon previous incarnations of the American obsession with Indian burial grounds. This reached new heights after publication of Jay Anson's 1977 bestseller, *The Amityville Horror*, which appeared just as the Cambodia-Vietnam War (1977–1991) began. As had been the case with the graphically violent revisionist Western, *Soldier Blue* (1970), released shortly after public disclosure of the My Lai massacre, through *Amityville*, Americans were again able to partially address aspects of their nation's expansionist and military history. The link between the hamlet of Amityville, Long Island, and Shinnecock burial practices was fictional, but it has made for such a lucrative constellation of storylines that references to it still litter the internet.⁸

An American horror of Indian ghostly vengeance is also a legacy of centuries of American desecration of Indian graves. One peak for this came in the 1830s, when Indian grave robbing and display became a popular gentleman's hobby in the wake of the physical anthropologist Samuel Morton's theories linking cranial capacity, race, and intelligence. After the 1880s, as American museums grew and professionalized, grave robbing increasingly institutionalized, and a drive for "salvage anthropology" accompanied the imperative to fill the shelves of American museums then intent upon presenting a triumphalist national

message. Notoriously, early twentieth-century salvage anthropologists, such as Alanson Buck Skinner, deceived tribes, including the Menomini, so as to fill the shelves of the American Museum of Natural History. Meanwhile, the Seneca Iroquois Arthur Caswell Parker dug up people who, in all likelihood, were his own relations while advancing his career as archaeologist for the New York State Museum. Despite being reproached for this by Indian peoples and threatened with being “witched,” he laughed it off, even writing to a “white” friend, “We have been digging up old Indians for the last six weeks and are having great luck. We find lots of ‘em too. Rate of ten a week. They are good injuns too, for you know that they say the only good Indian is a dead one” (as cited in Porter 2001, p. 63). Years of Indian lobbying for the bones and artifacts of their ancestors to be returned and the persistence of a Lakota woman named Maria Pearson who was appalled at the unequal treatment of Indian remains resulted in the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990. NAGPRA has made it a criminal offense to traffic in Native American human remains, and a number of museums have now ceased displaying them. However, the issue of materials that are “culturally unidentifiable” continues to be deeply problematic. The Smithsonian is required, under a similar law, to repatriate parts of its collection of some 18,500 individuals.⁹

Native anthropologist Arthur Parker may not have felt much of it, but American guilt over the desecration of Indian graves can be traced in an explicit literary form at least as far back as Philip Freneau’s 1787 poem, “The Indian Burying Ground.” Ironically, given the long history of settler fraud and deceit of Indian peoples in treaty-making, the poem urged the reader to imagine the Indian dead still present and warned, “No fraud upon the dead commit” (1907, p. 369). Recently, fear of the Indian graveyard became so culturally prevalent that it qualified for pastiche with *The Simpsons* and *South Park* television cartoon shows. This is a level of ridicule that previously has signaled that mainstream culture is ready to forget or at least embrace new thinking about a topic. Hopefully, it is the latter, since the issues invoked are likely to keep reappearing. King’s *Pet Sematary* focused upon ownership of land, as well as how porous the links might be between the living and the dead. Although it had Micmac peoples (who mostly live in Canada) fighting to reclaim lands in Maine, when King wrote his novel, the state was embroiled in a legal fight over sixty percent of its territory with the Maliseet, Penobscot, and Passamaquoddy bands of the Wabanaki Confederacy. Ultimately, the state was forced to pay out over US\$ 81,000 and to make a series of concessions to tribal sovereignty (Bergland 2000, pp. 165–167). King’s *Pet Sematary* was close to where the “Wendigo” lives, but, in fact, there is need to look to the supernatural for forceful signs of Indian rebirth in Maine. The state, which was the theater for both Metacom’s War (1675–1776) and the captivity of the redoubtable Mrs Rowlandson, continues to fight Indian peoples over clean water, potential gaming revenue, and the treaty obligations inherent in its 1820 constitution.

INDIAN HORROR

Horror writing produced by writers identifying as Native American has tended to disrupt or transgress the genre's boundaries, in so doing, mirroring the way Indigenous territories transcend settler state boundaries. Indigenous writers have also made use of a capability to think, not in an either/or fashion, but in a both/and modality. This links to the large number of tribal and intertribal traditions within which interaction with ghosts or spirits is neither unusual nor necessarily unwelcome.

Books such as Leslie Marmon Silko's epic *Gardens in the Dunes* (1999) and her critically acclaimed novel *Ceremony* (1977) are significant examples in this regard. *Gardens* invokes a spectrum of spiritual potentialities and supplanted the Biblical binary opposition of good and bad, God and the Devil, Christian and occult. It ends with a "white" female who has been a captive of sorts finding solace and resolution through returning to her own pre-Christian European heritage amidst the fairies and gnostic paganism of her Aunt in a bucolic part of Bath, England. The novel suggests that it is to this matriloal, pre-colonial, and mystical Europe that the non-Indigenous must look for redemption and succor. Silko's previous novel, *Ceremony*, had diagnosed what caused non-Indigenous problems. In so doing, it made them appear marginal and positioned "white people" as passive ghosts, the conjured inventions of Native America:

They see no life
 When they look
 They see only objects.
 The world is a dead thing for them

 They see no life.
 They fear
 They fear the world.
 They destroy what they fear.
 They fear themselves. (Silko 1977, p. 135)¹⁰

In *Ceremony*, Native medicine, nonbinary Native relationships with both the real and the imagined, and Laguna oral traditions are central, a fact that helped the book achieve success far beyond Native circles. The horror in *Ceremony* is "white," and what is presented as likely to scare "whites" most is themselves.

A number of Native American literary works have, at their heart, an educational dimension and use horror as a gateway to introduce the dominant culture to Native versions of the unknown to which fear is an appropriate response. Critics such as James Ruppert have argued that cultural work of this sort is a form of "strategic mediation" or, in Mary Louise Pratt's formulation, "auto-ethnography" (1992, p. 7).¹¹ Examples are plentiful and include Gerald Vizenor's *Bearheart* (1970), First Nations author Eden Robinson's *Monkey*

Beach (2000), and Joseph Bruchac's young adult novel *Whisper in the Dark* (2005). *Bearheart* makes use of the trickster Proude Cedarfair to introduce the Anishinaabe *nita ataged*, a lover of games of chance who lives in a wigwam covered in human scalps decorated inside with the human hands of those he has bested. Bruchac's novel introduces the Narragansett Whisperer, an entity whose fourth call makes those chosen disappear, as well as the cannibal, "Knife Hand," who is buried with the "Whisperer" in a cave. A pattern of interpenetration of Indigenous and non-Indigenous traditions is also central to Martin Cruz Smith's *Nightwing* (1977), Anna Lee Walter's *Ghost Singer* (1988), Louis Owen's *Sharpest Sight* (1995), Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* (2005), and the Choctaw-Cherokee writer Owl Goingback's *Crota* (1999). Such cultural interpenetration is also evident in the vampire novel, *Eye Killers* (1995) by the Navajo and Laguna Pueblo author A.A. Carr, and in *The Night Wanderer: A Native Gothic Novel* (2007) by the Ojibwa writer Drew Hayden Taylor. The vampires in Carr's novel have clear correspondences to the skinwalkers within Southwestern Native stories, while the grandmother within *The Night Wanderer* remembers stories about "nodweg creatures from the south that steal bad little children (though [Tiffany] secretly thought it was just another word for the Iroquois, long-ago mortal enemies of the Anishinaabe), and the wendigos—monsters from the north that were cannibals with insatiable appetites who grew and grew the more they ate" (Taylor 2007, p. 160).

Each of these books uses horror to introduce American Indian perspectives on the past, counter-memories that challenge ideas on ownership and sovereignty of material, psychological, and spiritual space. With the same imperative, recent horror films by Indigenous filmmakers have brought to life the terror that, for so many Indigenous peoples, accompanied being sent to an Indian residential boarding school. Thus, *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* (2014) brought to life "Popper," the sadistic Indian agent at St. Dymphna's, where young children of the Red Crow Mi'g Maq reservation were sent after 1976. *These Walls* (2012) had its teenage Indian hero fight to rescue the bones of murdered babies at another Indian residential school. The chilling *The Candy Meister*, a 2014 short film made by the Blackfoot collaborative filmmakers society Noirfoot, had an intrepid group of four tackle a demonic nun at a First Nations Residential School. Other recent Indigenous horror films have explored the loss of Indigenous languages (*The Burden of Being* 2013, set in 2064) and the complexities of plague, disease, and survival (*The Dead Can't Dance* 2010).

Renée Bergland has convincingly argued that this process of Indian re-visioning began in print as early as the Pequot and Mashpee William Apess's works from the 1830s, within which settlers were portrayed as frightening or ghost-like (2000). However, a number of contemporary Native works have taken care not to dwell on horror, per se, but to isolate the sickness that produces horror. This has allowed them to get beyond an uncomplex heaping of collective or transgenerational blame upon "white" peoples. For example, Eden Robinson's short story, "Dogs in Winter" identifies a horrifying malaise or evil that is not necessarily ethnically specific, rather it is a symptom of how we live in

the modern world that can afflict anyone. Such a nonhuman *windigo* condition, a psychotic urge to consume and advance the self at the expense of all others, also animates the evil in Vizenor's *Bearheart*; Louise Erdrich's character, Richard Whiteheart Beads, in *The Antelope Wife* (1998); the abusive mother, Hannah Wing, in Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms* (1996); and the merciless First World War killer, Elijah Whiskeyjack, in Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* (2006). A trans-tribal respect for balance underpins the *wétiko/windigo* tradition and links a number of the books listed above. For example, *The Antelope Wife* begins with a creation narrative that invokes two twins sewing, one with light beads, one with dark, each trying to upset the balance of the world. Although such an outlook gels well with a number of non-Indigenous counter-narratives that critique modernity and/or enlightenment values, in truth, it is much more than this. It is a spiritual and philosophical displacement of the whole constellation of binary thinking enshrined in Western Christian traditions.

Even so, some Native-authored texts provoking horror are much easier to read as allotting collective blame and promising collective revenge. The novel that has affected the genre in this regard in ways that other Indigenous texts that interculturally mediate and/or reverse aspects of Western Gothic have not is *Indian Killer* (1996), by the controversial Spokane-Coeur d'Alene author, Sherman Alexie. Alexie has recently been accused of multiple incidences of sexual harassment, in particular of Native women authors. This has prompted reappraisal of his work, but *Indian Killer* remains significant within the history of Indian-authored horror. It is the story of a vengeful, terrifyingly unknowable shadow, a spirit killer who kidnaps the firstborn son of a white family. The boy is returned toward the novel's close, and the killer, echoing elements of Native practices of counting coup or the interethnic practice of scalping, removes a small piece of his superhero pajamas. The "white" boy's story has a parallel, that of an undocumented, tribal, newborn baby, stolen from his Indian mother for the benefit of a wealthy "white" woman. This Indian boy in the novel is given the name John Smith, the same name as the English captain central to the Pocahontas myth and to the settlement of the first permanent English settlement in North America, Jamestown.

Indian Killer "kills" the intercultural valency of the word, "Indian," through denying the reader the reassurance of identifying who or what the terrifying presence is. At the heart of the novel is a vicious message of revenge delivered by an Indian student in the class of a liberal university professor. Her name is Marie Polatkin. She is at pains to explain to her professor, who shares a surname with Cotton Mather, the Puritan priest implicated in the events surrounding the Salem witch trials of 1692–1693, that his love of Indians does not mean he is excluded from their hatred. Neither is he, nor, by extension any liberal, free from danger should the dead Indians of the past ever be resurrected. "If the Ghost Dance worked," Marie explains, "there would be no exceptions. All you white people would disappear. All of you. If those dead Indians came back to life, they wouldn't crawl into a sweathouse with you. They wouldn't smoke the pipe with you. They wouldn't go to the movies and

munch popcorn with you. They'd kill you. They'd gut you and eat your heart" (Alexie 1996, p. 313). Such a message is perhaps at odds with Alexie's own Spokane-Coeur d'Alene Catholic affiliation, but it connects with certain Western Montana/Northern Idaho revitalization traditions, such as that linked to the nineteenth-century Wanapam prophet, Smohalla, who dreamt of pan-Indian unity and legions of Indian dead driving out non-Indigenous colonizers (p. 314). The novel ends at a cemetery on an Indian reservation with the killer dancing and singing, as owls alight menacingly upon surrounding trees: "Other Indians arrive and quickly learn the song. A dozen Indians, then hundreds, and more, all learning the same song, the exact dance. The killer dances and will not tire. The killer knows this dance is over five hundred years old. The killer believes in all masks, in this wooden mask" (Alexie 1996, p. 420).

An analogous prophecy of future collective Native power invigorated by the dead is also at the core of Leslie Marmon Silko's 1991 novel, *Almanac of the Dead* (1991). Here, the ghost of Karl Marx joins some sixty million Native spirits howling to retake the land and restore justice to America. "The truth is," the book states toward its close:

the Ghost Dance did not end with the murder of Big foot and one hundred and forty-four Ghost Dance worshipers at Wounded Knee. The Ghost Dance has never ended. It has continued, and the people have never stopped dancing; they may call it by other names, but when they dance, their hearts are re-united with the spirits of the beloved ancestors and the loved ones recently lost in struggle. Throughout the Americas, from Chile to Canada, the people have never stopped dancing; as the living dance, they are joined again with all our ancestors before them, who cry out, who demand justice, and who call the people to take back the Americas! (Silko 1992, pp. 723–724)

Such calls to awake the dead to enforce redress on behalf of the colonized can lose aspects of their potency when presented within a genre demarcated and, in great part, controlled by the dominant culture. Nonetheless, horror, mystery, and the imagination remain too intimately interconnected to be separately parsed. They are fundamental avenues for the cultural and spiritual crossing of thresholds, for reckoning with intergenerational loss and injustice, and for conjuring possible futures. As such, they are much more congenial to us than we often care to admit. We wish to be scared and to scare partly so that we may reengage with the past. In remembering, we recognize that our histories, however frightening, impact directly upon our choices for the future.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Leslie Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960) and *The Return of the Vanishing American* (1968). For more on horror as a transnational response to colonization, see Hudson, Dale. 2014. "Vampires and Transnational Horror" in *A Companion to the Horror Film*, edited by Harry M. Benshoff, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Although the horror

- genre is conventionally traced to the Inquisition in Europe, it has deep Dublin Protestant roots in the works of Sheridan le Fanu, author of *Camilla* (1872); Charles Maturin, Oscar Wilde's grand-uncle and author of *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820); and Bram Stoker, author of *Dracula* (1897).
2. See also Porter, Joy. 2007. "Population Matters in Native America." In *America's Americans: Population Issues in U.S. Society and Politics*, edited by Philip Davies and Iwan Morgan. London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, University of London, School of Advanced Study. According to United States Census data, the American Indian and Alaskan Native population grew by 1.5 percent between July 2014 and 2015 to a total of 6.6 million.
 3. Hamlet's phrase to Horatio [(1.5.167–168)] was echoed in 2002 in Donald Rumsfeld's use of the established business/military phrase, "unknown unknowns," with reference to the supply or otherwise of weapons of mass destruction to terrorists by the government of Iraq. Rumsfeld's term had its provenance in work done in 1955 within psychology and went on to prompt discussion by Slavoj Žižek and others of what they deemed the more important category, unknown knowns, that is, things we *do* in fact know but would prefer not to and, thus, pretend accordingly. Such things are very often contemplated within the horror genre.
 4. For more on how the fictional became real in this period and the hostility Early Modern Europeans expressed toward fictional entities, such as commercial corporations, see Henry S. Turner. 2016. *The Corporate Commonwealth: Pluralism and Political Fictions in England, 1516–1651*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
 5. *Mundus Novus* Albericus Vespuccius Laurentio Petri de Medicis salute plurimam dicit appear as *Vespucci Reprints*.
 6. See also Brightman, Robert A. 1988. "The Windigo in the Material World." *Ethnohistory* 35.4: 337–379.
 7. For more on Puritan violence against Native peoples, see Buchanan, Daniel P. 1998. "Tares in the Wheat: Puritan Violence and Puritan Families in the Nineteenth-Century Liberal imagination." *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 8.2: 205–236.
 8. *Soldier Blue* was not a popular success in the United States but was elsewhere, including the United Kingdom.
 9. NAGPRA continues to make slow progress under the oversight of the Secretary of the Interior. Some tribes, such as the Zuni, do not hold with repatriation back to Zuni lands partly because they have no ceremony to rebury the dead. The United States' largest tribe, the Navajo Nation, traditionally connects disease with interaction with the remains of the dead, making repatriation problematic.
 10. Ironically, Irish faeries (*daoine sídhe*) may have been invaded peoples who retreated under mounds (possibly Mesolithic hunter-gatherers supplanted by Neolithic farmers c. 4500 B.C.E). A tribe who worshipped the goddess Danu, the Tuatha Dé Danann, are said to be the original inhabitants of Ireland, defeated along with the Firbolg by invading Milesians from Spain (O'Kelly 1989, p. 135).
 11. See Ruppert, James. 1995. "Mediation in Contemporary Native American Writing." In *Native American perspectives on Literature and History*, edited by Alan R. Velie, 7–23. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press. Mary Louise

Pratt uses the idea of an “autoethnography” to refer to “instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer’s own terms” (1992, p. 7).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alexie, Sherman. 1996. *Indian Killer*. New York: Warner Books.
- Bergland, R.L. 2000. *The National Uncanny: Indian Ghosts and American Subjects*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.
- Cañizares-Esguerra, Jorge. 2006. *Puritan Conquistadors: Iberianizing the Atlantic, 1550–1700*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Carr, A.A. 1995. *Eye Killers*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Columbus, Christopher. 1930. *The Voyages of Christopher Columbus*. Edited by Cecil Jane. London: Hakluyt Society.
- Erdrich, Louise. 2004. Captivity. In *Original Fire: Selected and New Poems*, 9–11. New York: Harper Perennial.
- Forbes, Jack. 1992. *Columbus and Other Cannibals: The Wétiko Disease of Exploitation, Imperialism, and Terrorism*. Los Angeles: Autonomedia.
- Ford, Paul Leicester, ed. 1904. *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*. Vol. 2. New York: Putnam & Sons.
- Freneau, Philip. 1907. Indian Burial Ground. In *Poems of Philip Freneau*, ed. Fred Lewis Pattee, vol. 111, 369. Princeton, NJ: The Princeton University Library.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. 1983. *Novels*. Edited by Millicent Bell. New York: Library of America.
- Irving, Washington. 1983. *History, Tales, and Sketches*. New York: Library of America.
- Malone, Patrick M. 1993. *The Skulking Way of War: Technology and Tactics Among the New England Indians*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.
- Merrell, James H. 1999. *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Northrup, George T., trans. 1916. *Vespucci Reprints, Texts, and Studies*. Vol. 5. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- O’Kelly, Michael J. 1989. *Early Ireland: An Introduction to Irish Prehistory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Porter, Joy. 2001. *To Be Indian: The Life of Iroquois-Seneca Arthur Caswell Parker*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. 1992. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge.
- Robe, Stanley L. 1972. Wild Men and Spain’s Brave New World. In *The Wild Man Within: An Image in Western Thought from The Renaissance to Romanticism*, ed. Edward Dudley and Maximillian E. Novak, 39–54. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Rowlandson, Mary. 1952. A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs Mary Rowlandson. In *Original Narratives of Early American History: Narratives of Indian Wars, 1675–1699*, ed. Charles H. Lincoln, vol. 14, 107–166. New York: Barnes & Noble.
- Scharf, Thomas J., and Thompson Westcott. 1884. *History of Philadelphia 1609*. Philadelphia: Everts & Co.

- Shakespeare, William. 2006. *Hamlet*. Edited by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor. London: The Arden Shakespeare.
- Silko, Leslie Marmon. 1970. *Ceremony*. New York: Penguin Books.
- . 1992. *Almanac of the Dead*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Taylor, Drew Hayden. 2007. *The Night-Wanderer: A Native Gothic Novel*. Toronto: Annick Press.
- Thornton, Russell. 1987. *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History Since 1492*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Wakefield, Sarah F. 1997. *Six Weeks in the Sioux Teepees: A Narrative of Indian Captivity*. Edited by June Namias. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.



Vampires, Shape-Shifters, and Sinister Light: Mistranslating Australian Aboriginal Horror in Theory and Literary Practice

Naomi Simone Borwein

INTRODUCTION

The dark side of the Dreaming has inspired horror tales for generations of Australian writers. Concrete imaginings of Aboriginal mythology were twisted into the uncanny dreams and haunting nightmares of grim colonial fiction, the reflection of a preternatural and inhospitable land populated by monstrous denizens. Through a literary tradition with origins in the terrors of Terra Nullius and the Dreamtime, Aboriginal horror came to embody the violence of a barbarous colonial reality, the convict myth that rose up around that reality, and the more brutal mythological tales of the song lines as creation narratives. These narratives frequently depict simulacra of priapic imps, witches, vampires, and shape-shifting cannibals engaged in acts of murder, mischief, or revenge. Indigenous and convict mythologies collided, violently, in early Aboriginal horror literature. The texts focused on here are written by self-identified Aboriginal writers; the Indigenous novel is traditionally a literature of protest, and these authors are, overall, actively political, aware of their output, and have sophisticated ideological interventions underpinning their works. The contemporary mode usually relies on some combination of realistic horror and mythic allusion, which is often read in postcolonial terms by scholars such as Marty Young or Katrin Althans, as lingering colonial ghosts, palpable modern terrors, or a subversion of darkness. Colonial and postcolonial lenses problematize

N. S. Borwein (✉)
University of Newcastle, Callaghan, NSW, Australia

approaches to reading Aboriginal horror, and hereafter may be referred to as indighorror. Tropes of horror literature shift under different theoretical frameworks, much like they do under varying cultural influences. What constitutes Aboriginal horror can look radically altered when viewed through different lenses. Since its inception, with the critiques by Said, Spivak, and Bhabha, postcolonialism itself has increasingly been represented as a Western and post-structural concept, and arguably such a framework subverts, or even mistranslates, subaltern horror. However, Aboriginal horror can be analyzed through representations of monstrosity, totemic systems, and mythic tales, where animism reflects the destructive power of the ancestors to cause “constant conflict, bloodshed, and confusion,” a force left in dynamic fracture between human and animal states (Lawlor 1991, p. 328). This chapter first gives an overview of indighorror as a literary form and a fascinating area of research in need of further criticism. Then, it explores monstrosity in Aboriginal mythology. This leads to a textual analysis of Aboriginal horror tropes in relevant Indigenous fiction, through subaltern theories such as maban reality, Aboriginal fantastic, and Aboriginal totemism—read outside the postcolonial norm. Ultimately, modern Aboriginal writers find a niche in global horror.

To understand the unique aesthetic of Aboriginal horror, it is necessary to explicate some relevant nomenclature. Dreaming is an English translation of Aboriginal words like *alcheringa*, *djugurba*, or *tjukurpa*; it can be transcribed as “ancestry” and may also refer specifically to the time of ancestral beings (Mol 1982, p. 17). The totemic violence in the Dreaming is endemic to the song lines, which are topological and epistemological, cartographic and cosmologic. Dreaming is skewed in Australian horror to define monsters of the subconscious tied to pagan rite. But, in Aboriginal tradition, Dreaming maps ancestral epistemology, passed down through oral tradition, onto the land. In Aboriginal horror, nature is a living, theriomorphic entity, teeming with malevolent, deviant, mischievous, or lascivious beings. Totems are alive and exist parallel to people; they are mirror representations of identity cloaked in an embodied nature and take the form of anything from a tree or rock to a storm or animal. For Aboriginal horror, they reflect terrifying tales of ancestry in the now.

THREE STRAINS: TOWARD A MODERN GENRE

There are three major literary antecedents to modern indighorror. The first relies on the terrors of Terra Nullius—adapted into the myth of the hellish Antipodes being uninhabited before colonization in 1788—and the second on the convict myths that fed a literature of horror. Aborigines and their mythological figures were absorbed into this disembodied wilderness of sinister light and ominous shadows. As a reflection of Dreaming monsters, these figures were filtered through the eyes of white settlers until they were indistinguishable from the supernatural horror tropes of Lovecraft and Poe. This colonial literature, invested with brutal frontier violence, massacre, and rape, affected later Indigenous authors’ realistic renderings of the horrors of forced

assimilation, the Stolen Generation, and race crimes. The third main antecedent to modern indighorror is Ngarrindjeri scholar David Unaipon's 1924/1925 translation of the Aboriginal myth of the cannibalistic Yara Ma Tha Who. Previous president of the Australian Horror Writers Association, Marty Young, considers it the first Indigenous horror story, "an Aboriginal telling of the vampire tale" (2010, pp. 9–21). This red-skinned monster who dwells in fig trees, "sucks the blood from" his victims, leaving them "helpless upon the ground" as they transform into monsters (2001, p. 218). Unaipon was commissioned to produce "traditional Aboriginal stories" for ethnographic reasons (Young 2010, pp. 9–21). Oral tradition and Dreamtime were morphed into a genre of shock and awe, forever tying Aboriginal horror fiction to its often-mistranslated mythology.

Almost a century after Unaipon, the mainstream Indigenous horror writer Raymond Gates wrote "The Little Red Man," a modern extension of Unaipon's matter-of-fact retelling of the horror of the Yara Ma Tha Who: "eyes closed, thin lips drawn back over wicked teeth in a grimace that was grotesque in its ecstasy.... fingers and toes were short, fat tentacles" (2011, pp. 395, 389–390). With a contemporary emphasis on the grotesque pleasures of the vampiric act, the narrator is a twenty-first-century personification of mythic beings of the Dreamtime, cast against a fear-driven plot. Gates incorporates other speculative fiction tropes such as radioactive tomatoes and allusions to outsiders as aliens. The critic Althans reads Gates's short story as a combination of "classic patterns of Australian hitch-hiking horror with Aboriginal culture," through his depiction of the Yara Ma Tha Who (2013, p. 145). The non-Indigenous author Jacob Edwards uses this myth in his short story, "Behind the Black Mask." Set in 1879, it describes the bushranger outlaw Ned Kelly in a state of metamorphosis: "a small, red-skinned man who seemed now dwarfed by his outlandish accoutrements" as the "Yarama'yhawho" (2011, pp. 425–437). Edwards depicts the destructive power of an Aboriginal myth in colonial terms. Conversely, Gates's protagonist is infected by the corporeality of modern context and becomes both mythic figure and horror villain. This suggests a curious evolution from Unaipon's representation to Gates's contemporary use of Indigenous subject and land. Gates's horror is the recreation of mythic terrors in the Aboriginal Dreaming, stylistically finessed through narrative techniques used to build suspense. Yet, the duality of good and evil seen in classic horror is disrupted by the synchronic logic of the Dreaming—its invisible web of multiplicative groupings. The nature of what is animate and inanimate is also radically altered, which has ramifications for reading monsters.

In a 2014 radio interview, *Beyond Unaipon*, Raymond Gates describes how Aboriginality intersects with contemporary horror. Echoing other authors, he states that horror is a relatively "open genre" (2014). Gates defines indighorror: by taking the most simplistic definition of a literature that unsettles the reader, Aboriginal themes work within broad structural limitations created by the deterministic generic framework. He argues that horror offers more freedom to include Aboriginal elements from their culture, metaphysical world, and mythology. However, Gates notes that the Australian publishing industry

is uneasy with “strong Indigenous content” in the genre for reasons of “cultural sensitivity” (2014). If, as Althans asserts, the “discussion of a Gothic tradition in Australian Aboriginal literature is highly controversial,” placing it under the horror label seems doubly contentious (2013, p. 139). Yet, the *Beyond Unaipon* series and articles like D. Bruno Starrs’s “Writing Indigenous Vampires: Aboriginal Gothic or Aboriginal Fantastic?” reflect a growing desire among Aboriginal writers to use Indigenous characters, themes, and myths in genre fiction—that is to say, not read through the lens of “race” or positioned against the Australian national narrative.

TRACING AN ABORIGINAL HORROR TRADITION

Before Gates or Unaipon, there are traces of Aboriginality in Australian colonial horror tales. As will be seen, colonial representations have led to a plethora of postcolonial readings, where Aboriginal horror is regularly relegated to the gothic. The Australian horror fiction timeline in *Macabre* delineates a handful of important literary traces that helped form Australian horror. In “Appendix I,” the timeline begins at ~40,000 BCE with “evocative oral myths, known as Dreamings” that “would later influence modern horror authors” (2010, p. 670). The editors of *Macabre* list two early appropriations of Aboriginal horror imagery by colonists: the ghostly Indigenous figures found in E. Downs’s 1896 short story, “The Red Cap Spectre of the Robertson,” and the character of “King Rum Tum’s Ghost” in James Borlase’s 1867 tale. The timeline ends with Unaipon’s 1924/1925 horror story. In the introduction to *Macabre*, what Young calls “Aborigine content does not feature prominently in colonial dark fiction/horror stories,” except as “uneducated brutes and savages of the bush” (2010, pp. 9–21). However, Young’s “Colonial Ghosts and Modern Terrors: An Overview of Australian Horror Fiction” includes other colonial writers like “Marcus Clark, Barbara Baynton, Henry Lawson,” and Ernest Favenc, “whom delved into the horror genre to a certain extent,” portraying Indigenous figures as supernatural and vengeful, much like Lawson’s “The Bush Undertaker” (2009, p. 464). Thus, Young concludes by intimating that the horror elements that are Aboriginal are residual from the colonial context, as “the harsh Australian bush and the problems facing the European settlers in such a world. While ghosts made up the majority of the so-called horror stories,” ultimately they ally Aboriginal myth with “the supernatural or other-worldly” (2009, p. 465). This is bolstered by James Doig’s telling inclusion of Aboriginal elements in his introduction to *Australian Hauntings*, but not in his 2012 article on Australian horror novels after 1950. Situating *Australian Hauntings*, an anthology of colonial ghost stories, Doig discusses Aboriginal ghosts, Indigenous butchery, settler violations of natives, and the figures of the Bunyip and Jinkarra, which are featured in Rosa Praed’s 1891 “The Bunyip,” Marcus Clarke’s 1870 “Pretty Dick,” and Favenc’s 1890 “Haunt of the Jinkarras.” Through Doig, Aboriginal myth and culture are described in images of monstrosity and the fantastic and trussed to colonial horror. This places

Aboriginal horror in the supernatural ephemera of a broader Australian tradition—a repository for Australia's darkest fears.

What is the current critical position of indighorror? Extending his analysis from *Macabre*, Young notes research usually focuses on “the Gothic in colonial ‘horror’ ... ghost-stories, and the Vampire as a metaphor for Colonisation” (Young 2009, p. 464). Like many scholars, Young actively associates a critical legacy of Aboriginal horror to colonial and postcolonial gothic, through critics such as Althans, Ken Gelder, Jane Jacobs, and Gerry Turcotte, and a literary tradition through Sam Watson and Mudrooroo. These criticsglom to what Althans calls the subverting and transgressing effect of Aboriginal gothic (2013, p. 139). However, there are no Australian Aboriginal horror compendium volumes nor critical idioms available today. Indeed, Talie Helene's 2017 “A Year of Horror” neglects to mention the subgenre. An autochthonic representation of Aboriginal horror was brought to English literature through Unaipon, but it has existed in their oral tradition for tens of thousands of years; however, those traditions have regularly been usurped.

Aboriginal myth and horror have a dynamic relationship to the Australian tradition. The production of Australian horror fiction saw a waxing and waning, catalyzed by external factors ranging from import regulations, and censorship laws, to vicissitudes of literary taste. Doig notes “home-grown horror fiction was almost non-existent in the 1970s and 1980s” (2012, p. 115). Editor of *Aurealis* volume 14, Dirk Strasser indicates that Aboriginal mythology is an “important element in much [Australian] SF and horror ... which distinguishes it from the American and British versions” (1994, pp. 4–5). He calls the pressure in the 1990s to avoid Aboriginal myth in white Australian horror fiction a “form of politically correct censorship” done because “whites distort Aboriginal myths and get them wrong” (pp. 5, 4). For example, Queenie Chan's *The Dreaming* series relies on white anxieties bound to surreal dreams where monsters lurk. To complicate matters, the scholar Sandra Philips states that, in the 1980s and early 1990s, Indigenous authors tended to be published in life writing and memoir genres, if at all (2014). Indighorror was often marketed in these genres and expressed through graphic realism. Kim Scott's *Benang* is an extension of such genres—a mixture of colonial maleficence and totemic augurs of genocide. Through the works of Archie Weller, Watson, and Mudrooroo, the mythic violence of indighorror themes started to find a broader audience. Significantly, *Bloodsongs* was the first professional horror magazine in Australia, published from 1993 to 1997. As Steve Proposch, the former editor-in-chief of *Bloodsongs*, notes, “the title itself was ... referencing Songlines—inspired partly by Bruce Chatwin's book. The name of the company we published the magazine under was Bambada Press, Bambada being a Koori word for ‘fear’” (personal communication, June 1, 2017). *Bloodsongs*, a magazine on the splatterpunk end of horror, is the most overt example of such a title that uses Indigenous myth. Aboriginal horror is often used by Australian writers to elicit primal fear and evoke otherworldliness, but it has its own distinct aesthetic.

FROM CLARKE'S "WEIRD MELANCHOLY" TO ABORIGINAL HORROR MONSTERS

The monsters that fill the pages of Aboriginal horror have myriad progenitors. The "Weird Melancholy" that Marcus Clarke famously applied to the colonial Australian landscape helps evince modern extensions of these monsters. "Weird Melancholy" is a phrase derived from the aesthetics of Poe by Clarke in his 1897 critical Preface and stylistically linked to his short story about the Bunyip, "Pretty Dick." He creates horror images of isolation, foreboding, and entrapment that subsume both Indigenous figures and their mythology in the land:

The sun suddenly sinks, and the mopokes burst out into horrible peals of semi-human laughter ... from out of the bottomless depth of some lagoon the Bunyip rises, and, in form like monstrous sea-calf.... From a corner of the silent forest rises a dismal chant, and around the fire dance natives painted like skeletons. All is fear.... (Clarke 1976, pp. 645–646)

The totemic mopokes' "semi-human laughter" is reminiscent of the terrifying stories of the homicidal *kurdaitcha* (executioner) from Dreamtime, and it signals the approach of witches (Mol 1982, p. 6). Gelder explores the more prominent form of the Bunyip, positing that, through the lyrical beauty of "this lurid passage," the mythic figure of the Bunyip becomes the lens for viewing "the Australian bush, Aborigines and monstrosity": "yoked together under the exaggerated sign of the Gothic" (2007, pp. 116–117). But, Clarke's passage is redolent with the visceral horror of the Australian outback: entrapment, alienation, and strangeness; the palpable fear of some diabolical or supernatural unknown in this encapsulated, "intense moment" resembles Lovecraft's horror and use of mythic monsters (Wolf 1989, p. 1). As Leonard Wolf notes, "[t]he beauty of horror literature" is that it depicts a nightmare "from which we can wake at will" (p. 1). But, Dreaming is not a state one wakes from, and convict settlers could not escape the horrors of the Australian outback. For Wolf, nightmares provide "images that speak to our subconscious," directly because "they resonate with myth" (p. 1). Horror fiction contains "all the impossible creatures that, in our dreams, represent the panoply of our fears.... the vast troop of uncreatures—the shape-shifters and the mixed-up beasts, lamias and manticores..." (p. 1). These classical horror figures of Western mythology have similarities to the monsters of the Dreaming in the Australian Aboriginal context, but with separate ontogenies.

While a "terrifying pantheon of monstrous beings" infests "traditional Aboriginal 'Dreaming' narratives," Christine Judith Nicholls notes in the article "'Dreamings' and place" that "demons and supernatural entities" proliferate in most religious and mythic traditions, as "[m]onstrous beings" that are "allegorical in nature, personifying evil" (2014, p. 2). However, in a uniquely Aboriginal tradition, their manifestations of "wickedness" are sutured to the land they inhabit. There are "Tricksters, shape-changers and shape-shifters,"

“roaming Ogres, Bogeymen ... Cannibal Babies, Giant Baby-Guzzlers” (p. 2). Sorcerers inhabit this mythic otherworld, “gleefully dismember[ing] their victims limb by limb” (p. 2). In the song lines of certain mobs, “malevolent shades and vampire-like Wind[s]” exist, as well as “murderous, humanoid fish-maidens who live in deep waterholes and rockholes” that drown their victims, seemingly like the vicious Sirens of *The Iliad* or the “impossible creatures” of Wolf’s description. Such “[m]onstrous entities” fill the darker narratives of Aboriginal myth, which is usually tied to blood; the scion of a religion that predates paganism, they are totems and skybeings who live “parallel lives to the human beings residing in the same places” (p. 3). The monstrosity of Dreamtime has become an area of academic interest, spurred on by horror studies. In “Horror on Home Turf,” Mel Campbell posits that the “mythological creatures that fill today’s [Australian] horror literature and movies hail from faraway lands,” but “vastly more terrifying creature[s]” are “much closer to home” in Aboriginal myth, suggesting a “bestly reality” (2010, p. 16). The influx of global horror projected onto Indigenous mythological creatures is a central focus of the critical text *Monster Anthropology*, which creates monster theory out of Aboriginal horror figures. Thus, its editors, Yasmine Musharbash and Geir Presterudstuen, form a universal paradigm of horror realism, through monstrous realities. They reference the horror theory of Noël Carroll—*The Philosophy of Horror*, which relies on Hume’s paradox of Tragedy and Mary Douglas’s anthropology to analyze monsters—as well as Judith Halberstam’s and David Skal’s critiques of horror, and monster reality. This reciprocal relationship between anthropology and horror is reminiscent of how Unaipon’s horror story came into being, commissioned with other transcribed Aboriginal Myths and Legends. This is a curious extension of the way Aboriginal totemism is analyzed and even co-opted by myriad eminent theorists and anthropologists to examine the ontological system of signs inherent in what they viewed as Aboriginal taxonomy, rife with primitivism, savagery, and sexual taboo: such scholars include Sir James Frazer, W.E.H. Stanner, Sigmund Freud, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Emile Durkheim (Mol 1982, p. 10). The editors of *Monster Anthropology* index Aboriginal mythic figures from the mad Burnt Woman to the *kurdaitchi*. In this volume, such figures are rooted in the horrors of the real, explored alongside zombies, vampires, ghosts, and ogres in their culturally specific forms.

The editors’ generalized paradigm exposes monsters, whose defining characteristics and relationships to setting mimic a working definition of Aboriginal horror fiction. Like the protagonists of many modern indighorror texts, *Monster Anthropology* suggests “monsters are deeply embedded in ... socio-cultural contexts” (2014, p. 13). But, they posit that seemingly “[m]onsters lose their significance with the introduction of new and/or outside influences,” as “prevalent fears are superseded by new ones” (p. 13). Yet, clearly Aboriginal monsters retain the old. And, pertinently for new authors, “[u]rbanization in itself is another major cause for monstrous displacement or transformation” (p. 13). This displacement extends to the dispossession of the Aboriginal

subject and is a fluid site of Aboriginal horror. Unlike the more universalist paradigm that *Monster Anthropology* advocates, Aboriginal horror can be perceived through an Indigenous ontological lens. Such horror moves like the song lines, reforming itself around mythic figures in new spaces, yet retaining its origin in the Dreaming—which never progresses or changes its constituent parts, but instead is apprehended in different physical manifestations.

HORROR AS ABORIGINAL MYTH: SELECTED TEXTS

These moribund and monstrous forms reconstituted in contemporary Aboriginal writings are culturally specific reflections of terrifying stock figures that inhabit the classic horror landscape: manifested in the *werebear* (werewolf), *namorrododo* (vampire), *jonjurrie* (death spirit), *kadaitchi* (sorcerer), *moogi* (devil), *puhung* (terror dog), and so on. The ubiquity of mythic representations is visible in a spectrum of authors who employ Aboriginal horror motifs. The Indigenous authors Mudrooroo, Sam Watson, and Alexis Wright form the modern literary foundations of Aboriginal horror, which critics readily understand in postcolonial terms. Studies on the topic by Françoise Kral, Penny Van Toorn, Turcotte, Althans, and Gelder bind the gothic binary to the postcolonial dichronism. The gothic, itself, is an apt repository for a mistranslated Dreaming—surreal and uncanny in its new literary embodiment. The definition of “Global/Postcolonial Horror” that Gelder proffers is inherently gothic, reflective of his readings of Aboriginalism in Australian and postcolonial gothic in editions by Spooner and McEvoy, and Mulvey-Roberts: “[t]he tropes of horror—spectralisation, the return of the repressed, uncanny (mis)recognitions, possession (and dispossession), excess, the ‘monstrousness’ of hybridity—have often lent a certain structural logic to postcolonial studies” (2000, p. 35). Gelder’s definition accentuates dynamic mistranslation, reminiscent of the way critics generally read Aboriginal horror texts, overemphasizing gothic aesthetics over pure horror and misconstruing the radically different synchronic structure of reality seen in Aboriginal epistemology—by constraining it within binaries. To understand this disjunct between standard readings of the genre and the actuality of the violence and foreboding of these texts, consider how each author builds an uneasy horror atmosphere, setting tone and pace through Aboriginal myth. These Indigenous authors also apply subaltern theories or taxonomies to their narrative structures as discursive agents.

The writing and theory of Mudrooroo critically explicates horror tropes, like the vampiric *namorrododo*. *The Undying* is the first novel in his vampire trilogy. It starts with a song line, the Ghost Dreaming, written in “the language of the ghosts” (1998, p. 3). The “power of the Ghost Dreaming move[s]” the narrative along, driving the plot (p. 3). This purportedly “unknown” force creates palpable foreboding. To the reader, the strangeness of difference endows the story with a variant on horror’s sublime dread. A sense of contamination, seen in vampire narratives, is catalyzed by an old ghost woman, through dreams. To a Western audience, these reveries are the space of Freud’s uncanny,

mistranslations of the Dreaming. Typical of horror, Mudrooroo's narrative is preoccupied by the violent exchange of life and death. The protagonist, George, is the strange, undead Other who cannot stand the abnormal intensity of Antipodean light (p. 1). George and his community are characterized as a "mob of strange," "weird blackfellows" eating carcasses "succulent with blood" (pp. 23, 26, 22). The cruelty of the land is underscored by those "inimical forces out to destroy," running parallel to mythic creatures such as a *werebear*, a shape-shifter, and a *subagu*, whose violent sexual interactions are reflective of animistic transformation as much as bloodlust (pp. 182, 183–188).

In his article, "Maban Reality and the Indigenous Novel," Mudrooroo twists "the magic of our Dreaming, of our own genres, and ways of speaking," into an extensive definition of his theory, applied in his fiction (1997, p. 89). It is a gritty, harsh subversion of Latin American magical realism, itself a descendent of chivalric tradition, Spanish epics, folklore, and surrealism. Maban reality is "characterised by a firm grounding in the reality of the earth or country, together with an acceptance of the supernatural as part of everyday reality" (p. 97). As an ontological framework, maban reality addresses a "complex system of mythologies which underpins Indigenality," much like Aboriginal horror. Mudrooroo notes that science is a site of horror for Aborigines: "ethnologists and anthropologists" are translators (p. 97). Their works are not "examples of scientific objectivity," but translations of "maban reality into natural scientific discourse"—much like the horror of *Monster Anthropology* (pp. 91–92). Maban reality "stems back to ... an original split in creation" between good and evil—which forever ruptured a dichronistic vision of classic horror (p. 99). Interestingly, Mudrooroo's theory evokes violent myth through a figure named Maban (a *kadaitchi*), a shape-shifting sorcerer, involved in homicidal tales that made him proximal to the concrete world.

Mudrooroo relies on the European critical tradition to build subaltern theory: for example, Michel Foucault's application of authorial voice, and György Lukács's exploration of genre structure. In a 1992 article, Van Toorn reads Mudrooroo through Mikhail Bakhtin's theory, suggesting his fiction is a discursive vehicle for fear that drives a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment (p. 276). Such an emphasis on mythic fear and violence in his narrative implies the horror plot, constructed by Mudrooroo to depict the Aboriginal condition in "a fluid shape-shifting mythic reality" (1997, p. 91). Through Mudrooroo, this reality is given a menacing and mercurial personification and identity.

While Mudrooroo creates theory that he applies to fiction, Sam Watson uses Aboriginal totemism and convict myth. *The Kadaitchi Sung* sounds like a mellifluous title, until *kadaitchi* is translated. It invokes a brutal myth of murder and revenge. The prologue describes the birth of the *kadaitchi*, a death squad conceived by *Biamée* the ancient skybeing. Chapter one starts with the personification of death through totems: "bird, fish and animal totems hunted silently. The smaller spirits of the mighty winds scudded across the outstretched fingers of the restless heavens and, far beneath the clouds, death stalked on hushed

feet" (Watson 1990, p. 5). Dread is extended in the narrative, as "the hunted fled in terror" at the danger of *purnung*, its "red eyes" penetrating the strange "wasteland" (p. 5). Monstrosity is described through the half-human progeny of death: incubus-like priapic death spirits known as the *jonjurrie* impregnated "tribal maidens" with "misshapen spirit children," what Watson calls "monster[s]" (p. 9). They are juxtaposed to monstrous whites through realistic frontier horrors. Perpetuated by a *moogi*, or colonial "devil man," violence is described in graphic vernacular: people "drippin' blood and brains and shit" (pp. 11–12). The scenes culminate, and indeed collide, in a bellicose and grotesque altercation between *moogi* men, an Indigenous woman, and the *jonjurrie*. In this area of union, the Indigenous woman is decapitated by the *moogi*, and a *jonjurrie* has a role in evisceration: "sharpened kangaroo bone ... rammed up into" a "white man's lower belly," piercing "his intestines and lower organs" (p. 22). The scene disrupts the *unheimlich* with Aboriginal myth, a "white man" converses with "corpses that lay sprawled at his feet" as the *jonjurrie* spears the man's "left eye" (p. 22). The passage ends with "a maze of black holes and dancing shadows," an ominous labyrinthine space reminiscent of totemic silhouettes and shadows, heralding the Dreaming's dark destructive power (p. 23).

Conversely, Watson's Aboriginal chamber of horrors resembles the horror pornography of Marquis de Sade:

The gin gave an agonised gasp and died ... her spirit sped into the upper air, screaming to all those of the blood to avenge her ... lying belly down across a narrow bed Sambo's fingers were still buried in her throat. He had strangled her while holding her head between his thighs ... Mr Justice Jones was naked, lying on her back, his penis buried in her anus.... (Watson 1990, pp. 221–222)

From this cellar of colonial depravity, the *kadaitcha* and *jonjurrie* are enlisted to exact revenge. Here, forms of myth create a discourse on violence that plays with "misshapen sickly" horror villains and "misshapen" mythic monsters (p. 222). Watson's narrative oscillates between depictions of Aboriginal myth and convict myth. At these junctures, horrific sadism takes place.

Like Watson, Alexis Wright applies totemic and mythic imagery, but constructs a muliebral terrorscape. In her novel, *Plains of Promise*, Aboriginal mythology builds the tension and atmosphere of horror, of impending doom, through "spirits that haunt the night in Aboriginal places" (1997, p. 15). This atmosphere is seemingly ethereal, ancestral, and sinister. But it is tied to the totemic system: "Their spiritual ancestors grew" increasingly "disturbed by the thirsty, greedy foreign tree intruding into the bowels of their world" (p. 4). This villainous alien tree planted by the whites leaves them "gasping for air" (p. 4). Such beings are absorbed into it through tiny veins, representing the poisoning of the Dreaming, and disrupting the synchronic logic of the totemic system (Lawlor 1991, p. 316). In revenge, the ancestral spirits "invited Cousin Crow to sit along the branches and draw the cards of death" (Wright 1997,

p. 4). Wright fuses totems and dark omens through the crow and the tree branches. The sense of foreboding is linked to Indigenous dispossession and the ravages of assimilation. The corporeal actualization of this curse is described by Wright through the Burnt Woman myth. The Burnt Woman was a “genuine object of fear,” particularly for men, her countenance a horrible combination of the sublime and the grotesque (Alimardanian 2014, p. 94). The crow prefigures the transformation of the Burnt Woman; and, Wright layers this mythic tale over the “final nightmare ... to come,” trussing horror and Aboriginal tradition: a “black bird” flies “in the night” tormenting, pecking a woman, who sinks “into the darkness of the tree shadows” (1997, p. 14). These shadows are vengeful skybeings that construct an environment with “no escape”; she self-immolates with kerosene, forming a “human fireball” (pp. 14, 10). Missionaries in the narrative believe the madwoman has simply killed herself; this passage “monstrously epitomises how non-Indigenous people fail to recognize what kills” (Musharbash 2014, p. 54). Tropes of Aboriginal horror and murder are disguised in Wright’s context; fireballs resemble the “soul-destroying, devouring, malignant power called Mamu” created through its “destructive force ... and its diverse embodiments” (Eickelkamp 2014, p. 57). Furthermore, horror elements are highlighted by the entrapment and cultural isolation of “Aboriginal inmates” at the girls’ mission, which drives them “crazy,” makes them *waragu* (madwomen) (Wright 1997, pp. 4, 14). The pernicious foreign tree and the malevolent new landscape of the mission exude horror. The play on ancestral totems and mythic actions is a darkly catalytic reprisal for sin.

The fictions of these authors approximate a modern ontological scaffolding of Aboriginal horror figures reflective of the dark side of the Dreaming; they mirror homicidal maniacs, werewolves, succubi, the ghostly undead, and vampires. Epistemological differences between other cultural myths and Aboriginal mythology challenge understandings of essential connectivity between subject and object, animate and inanimate, so central to the Dreaming. For instance, Julia Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror* blends “the logic of other” Western “mythical and ritual systems” through semiotics, which if applied to Aboriginal horror would necessarily make mythic figures objects that defy the unique order-providing referents of the Dreaming (1982, p. 84). This sort of approach irrevocably alters the subject’s relationship to the landscape, where the distinction between individual and nature is blurred; because, “nature is only dealt with in the variety of its aspects” (Mol 1982, p. 10). Such a paradigm shift in subject and land has implications for understanding monstrosity, undeadness, and the psychological manifestations of shock and terror transposed onto a narrative landscape, where shadow totems can be skewed into demonic inhabitants of a hangman’s tree. Aboriginal horrors are concrete and multiplicative, linked through the body, spirit, sacred space, symbol, and reality—the construction of a nonsequential order.

MODERN HORROR GENRE FICTION

Lastly, consider modern Aboriginal genre writers whose works exemplify the form contemporary indig horror often takes: for example, Phillip McLaren and D. Bruno Starrs. Unlike the use of stark genre conventions by Gates, McLaren applies the “criminal dreaming” to Aboriginal thriller, and Starrs creates Aboriginal fantastic.

Through genre fiction and subaltern theory, the complex translation of the Dreaming is visible. McLaren’s novel *Scream Black Murder* is marketed as a crime thriller and set in an Aboriginal community. Typical of Australian and Indigenous horror, such novels are classified by publishers as anything but horror (Doig 2012, p. 112). Based on at least one real murder, McLaren’s tale begins with the clinical description of the abnormal decomposition of flesh: “Human flesh decays five times more slowly when wet” and the formation of an “Aboriginal Homicide Unit” (1995, p. 1). The plot is motivated by the imperative to catch a serial killer. The Dreaming is transformed into a forensic apparatus: “the collective consciousness style of problem solving which Aboriginal society had successfully applied for thousands of years had finally reached the high technological urban homicide squad of Sydney—‘criminal dreaming?’” (p. 142). Through McLaren’s manipulation of genre conventions, the criminal dimensions of the Dreaming are instrumental in dissecting the mind of a monster.

Revamping the formula of Stoker’s *Dracula* in the novel *That Blackfella Bloodsucka Dance!*, Starrs builds a Dreaming villain, akin to the *namorrododo*. He uses a prologue on Terra Nullius as an originating event, one that brings strangers into a land and makes that land strange. Thus, Starrs creates the conditions for Aboriginal fantastic: as “an enlightened rationality in which the supernatural is introduced but ultimately rejected by the author” (2014, para. 10). In his 2014 article on Aboriginal fantastic, Starrs explicates his position to indig horror. His book, “one type of Aboriginal horror ... the Aboriginal vampire novel,” is an exploration of the nexus between “Dreamtime, Catholicism, vampirism and atheism” (2014, para 1). He acknowledges that the structure of his novel is informed by a “Foucauldian emphasis ... an awareness of the constructed status and nature of the subject/focus of knowledge” that is in conflict with “the foundations of any reductive typology” (Starrs 2014, para. 14). His work evokes the still powerful imperative to be culturally sensitive. Aboriginal elements that are fused to horror tropes elicit “the potential for angry feedback from my Aboriginal Australian kin,” as “cynical commentators” (2014, para. 1). Starrs, nevertheless, reasserts that “Aboriginal horror is a genre noteworthy for its instability and worthy of further academic interrogation” (2014, para. 16). Interrogation suggests the tentative position Aboriginal horror fiction has in a long-held colonial context and is played out through the instability of characterizations.

Blackfella Bloodsuckas begins with the “prehistoric terror” of the Dreamtime and the original myth of Terra Nullius (2011, p. 22). The epistolary style of the narrator mirrors Mr Harker’s diary entries in *Dracula*. Starrs’s vampiric octo-

room is “a totemic figure like the sultry but terrifying Count Dracula [used] as a proxy for other kinds of primordial anxieties we cannot easily articulate” (2014, para. 16). But, he creates his own monstrous totemic system in a land that “hosts numerous denizens of the Underworld. These evil entities are hiding there ... unseen in Australian landscapes ... waiting, like a dormant, genderless virus” (2011, p. 5). Viral infection and disease spread, so typical of vampirology and zombie studies, is absorbed into the Dreaming. Ultimately, the protagonist is transformed into a *namorrododo*-esque figure, playing with vampiric subjectivity of the Aboriginal Self, from Mudrooroo to Unaipon. Starrs’s subject and identity is monstrous, both in Dreamtime and in the European tradition.

The work of Starrs is an attempt to create Aboriginal horror that incorporates the instability of Indigenous identity. His critique is inherently poststructural, a conflicted ideology of the fantastic that purportedly “rejects such [European] mythologies as dangerous, fanciful superstition,” while simultaneously it “rejects the Indigenous existential rationale somewhat less vigorously than it rejects the existential superstitions of Catholicism and/or vampirism” (2014, para. 14). Regardless, he subverts the European tradition to investigate Aboriginal horror.

The writing of Starrs highlights the state of indighorror today. By problematizing Aboriginality in horror, “instability,” as dynamic exchange of subject, and land seen in maban reality, Aboriginal totemism, and Aboriginal fantastic become features of the genre. Horror conventions, like McLaren and Gates use, incorporate Indigenous culture and myth, which can be read with or without an understanding of Aboriginal epistemologies. White Australian and Aboriginal anxieties drive the modern form through myth, trauma, and violation.

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINALITY AND GLOBAL HORROR: A CONCLUSION

Born out of myth, indighorror is a critically neglected but distinct subgenre in the Australian horror tradition. The rise of modern global horror, with its digital publishing houses and distribution methods, has increased its visibility. Largely read in stark postcolonial gothic terms, its special brand of horror with its own host of terrifying figures and themes is often misrepresented. Totemic analysis and monster studies are alternatives to postcolonial readings of indighorror but, when applied through horror theory, tend to be laced with anthropological imperatives, as is the case with Carroll or Musharbar and Presterudstuen. Subaltern theories like Mudrooroo’s maban reality or Starrs’s Aboriginal fantastic inadvertently recreate the colonial lens of poststructural binaries that is often irreconcilable with the fluid and synchronic epistemology of Dreaming seen in indighorror texts. Authentic Aboriginal totemism, animism, and myth inform the motile space of monsters in Aboriginal horror tales that predate Unaipon’s first Indigenous horror story by tens of thousands of years. These tales have

been infiltrated by the violent reality of the Australian colonial condition—itsself fed by convict myth. This unique underpinning is not lost in modern Aboriginal horror literature. It reflects the real dark side of the Dreaming.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alimardanian, Mahnaz. 2014. Burnt Woman of the Mission. In *Monster Anthropology*, ed. Yasmine Musharbash and Geir H. Presterudstuen, 93–108. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Althans, Katrin. 2013. White Shadows: The Gothic Tradition in Australian Aboriginal Literature. In *A Companion to Australian Aboriginal Literature*, ed. Belinda Wheeler, 139–154. New York: Camden House.
- Campbell, Mel. 2010. Horror on Home Turf. *The Age*, June 19, A2, p. 16.
- Carroll, Noël. 1990. *The Philosophy of Horror*. London: Routledge.
- Clarke, Marcus. 1976. Port Arthur. In *Michael Wilding*, ed. Marcus Clarke. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press. Originally Published 1897.
- Doig, James. 2012. The Australian Horror Novel Since 1950. In *Sold by the Millions: Australia's Bestsellers*, ed. Toni Johnson-Woods and Amit Sarwal, 112–127. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- . 2013. Introduction: The Colonial Ghost Story. In *Australian Hauntings*, ed. James Doig, 6–36. Rockville, Maryland: Wildside Press LLC. Kindle Edition.
- Edwards, Jacob. 2011. Behind the Black Mask. In *Dead Red Heart*, ed. Russell B. Farr, 425–437. Greenwood, Western Australia: Ticonderoga Publications.
- Eickelkamp, Ute. 2014. Specters of Reality. In *Monster Anthropology*, ed. Yasmine Musharbash and Geir H. Presterudstuen, 57–73. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gates, Raymond. 2011. The Little Red Man. In *Dead Red Heart*, ed. Russel B. Farr, 379–395. Greenwood, Western Australia: Ticonderoga Publications.
- . 2014. *Beyond Unaipon: Part 1*. Interview by Daniel Browning, Australian Broadcasting Company, Saturday 21 June.
- Gelder, Ken. 2000. Global/Postcolonial Horror: Introduction. *Postcolonial Studies* 3 (1): 35–38.
- . 2007. Australian Gothic. In *The Routledge Companion to the Gothic*, ed. Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy, 115–123. London: Routledge.
- Helene, Talie. 2017. A Year of Horror. In *The Year's Best Australian Fantasy and Horror 2014*, ed. Liz Gryzb and Talie Helene, 25–42. Greenwood, Western Australia: Ticonderoga Publications.
- Kristeva, Julia. 1982. *Powers of Horror*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lawlor, Robert. 1991. *Voices of the First Day Awakening in Aboriginal Dreaming*. Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions International.
- McLaren, Phillip. 1995. *Scream Black Murder*. Sydney, Australia: HarperCollins.
- Mol, Hans. 1982. *The Firm and the Formless*. Ontario, Canada: Wilfred Laurier University Press.
- Mudrooroo. 1997. Maban Reality and The Indigenous Novel. In *The Indigenous Literature of Australia*. Melbourne: Hyland House.
- . 1998. *The Undying*. Sydney: Harper Collins.
- Musharbash, Yasmine. 2014. Introduction. In *Monster Anthropology*, ed. Yasmine Musharbash and Geir H. Presterudstuen, 1–24. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Nicholls, Christine Judith. 2014. Dreamings and Place—Aboriginal Monsters and Their Meanings. *The Conversation*, April 30, 1–12. Accessed May 8, 2017. <https://theconversation.com/dreamings-and-place-aboriginal-monsters-and-their-meanings-25606>.
- Phillips, Sandra. 2014. *Beyond Unaipon: Part 1*. Interview by Daniel Browning, Australian Broadcasting Company, Saturday 21 June.
- Starrs, D. Bruno. 2011. *That Blackfella Bloodsucka Dance!* Saarbrücken, Germany: JustFiction! Edition.
- . 2014. Writing Indigenous Vampires: Aboriginal Gothic or Aboriginal Fantastic? *Journal of Media and Culture* 17 (4): ISSN 14412616. Accessed May 6, 2017. <http://journal.mediaculture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/834>.
- Strasser, Dirk. 1994. Editorial. *Aurealis* 14: 4–5.
- Unaipon, David. 2001. Yara Ma Tha Who. In *Legendary Tales of the Australian Aborigines*, ed. Stephen Muecke and Adam Shoemaker, 217–219. Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press. Originally Published 1930.
- Van Toorn, Penny. 1992. The Terrors of Terra Nullius: Gothicising and De-Gothicising Aboriginality. *World Literature Written in English* 32 (2): 87–97.
- Watson, Sam. 1990. *The Kadditcha Sung*. Ringwood: Penguin Books.
- Wolf, Leonard. 1989. *Horror*. New York and Oxford: Facts on File.
- Wright, Alexis. 1997. *Plains of Promise*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press.
- Young, Marty. 2009. Colonial Ghosts and Modern Terrors: An Overview of Australian Horror Fiction. In *Reading Down Under*, ed. Amit Sarwal and Reema Sarwal, 454–472. New Delhi: SSS Publications.
- . 2010. Australia's Short Horror Story: An Introduction. In *Macabre*, ed. Marty Young and Angela Challis, 9–21. Western Australia: Brimstone Press.
- Young, Marty, and Angela Challis, eds. 2010. *Macabre*. Western Australia: Brimstone Press.



Men, Women, and Landscape in American Horror Fiction

Dara Downey

“You’d have had to take your choice between me and the landscape,” a woman named Miss Mary Pask tells the male narrator of Edith Wharton’s 1925 short story of the same name (1975, p. 155). The choice, the story makes clear, is between the freedom represented by the landscape, or the sickening ministrations of an abjectly clinging woman. The narrator, who is from New England, visits the unmarried Pask in her isolated home in Brittany, and it’s only while waiting at her door for the housekeeper to fetch her that he remembers hearing that his hostess had died over a year previously. We ultimately learn that the reports of her death had been greatly exaggerated; however, the narrator’s fragile mental health and Pask’s strange, horribly seductive demeanor, along with her unnerving habit of insinuating that she has indeed died (it eventually emerges that she is recovering from a cataleptic trance), combine to leave him unpleasantly unsure if she wants him to share her bed or her grave (Thomas 1991, p. 114). When he can take no more of her ghastly attentions, he slams “the door on that pitiful low whimper, and the fog and wind enveloped me in healing arms” (p. 158). Despite nature’s hostility, the story seems to suggest that, for Wharton’s male character, the decision is already made.

As this chapter argues, this particular pattern—in which a male character is caught between a howling wilderness and the stifling attentions of a potentially murderous woman—is the essential building block for a substantial proportion of horror texts produced in the United States, by male and female writers alike. Indeed, this triangulated relationship between men, women, and the landscape

D. Downey (✉)
School of English, Trinity College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland

is a core structuring element of America's self-defining rhetoric, especially in relation to the "myth" of the American Frontier and pre-twentieth-century depictions of the continent as "free" or unoccupied.¹ This chapter excavates some of the ways in which the fear of the perceived imprisoning, emasculating effects of female company, aligned with depictions of landscape (to which women are ostensibly opposed) as frightening, disorienting, and dangerous, play out across American horror fiction.

In particular, my focus here is on a number of startling confluences between short uncanny tales by American women working within what is often seen as a "genteel," semi-European tradition around the *fin de siècle* and later fiction by male writers more usually classed as horror. It traces a series of resonant images that connect Sarah Orne Jewett's "The Queen's Twin" (1899) to Stephen King's shorter fiction and Wharton's "Bewitched" (1925) to Peter Straub's *Ghost Story* (1979). To some extent, this is a relatively small and indeed arbitrary choice of texts, and so prevalent is the dynamic I outline here that a myriad of others could have been included or substituted, including Ambrose Bierce's short stories, Gertrude Atherton's "The Striding Place" (1905), Thomas Tryon's *Harvest Home* (1973), Fritz Leiber's *Our Lady of Darkness* (1978) (which does for San Francisco what the texts I discuss do for New England), T.E.D. Klein's *The Ceremonies* (1984), Herman Raucher's *Maynard's House* (1980), and Elizabeth Hand's *Waking the Moon* (1994), *Mortal Love* (2004), and *Wylding Hall* (2015) (like Wharton's story, some of these are set in Europe). Those I examine here are, however, united by a tendency to oppose monstrous female figures to male homosocial bonds in quite explicit ways. At the same time, they triangulate this opposition with a third term—wild, underpopulated, often figuratively feminized American landscapes—with which the central male characters have a decidedly ambivalent relationship.

These fictionalized American landscapes are frequently labyrinthine and even actively hostile, arousing terror in male characters who should, according to the myth of the American pioneer hero, revel in open spaces and the possibilities for escape and self-determination that they are cast as offering. From here, it is possible to read the repeated evocations of some kind of feminine malevolent principle at work in the New England woods as a kind of obfuscation, both revealing and concealing a related but separate fear of the American landscape itself. In other words, such female figures effectively function as scapegoats, at once giving form to and distracting attention away from the central locus of terror—the supposedly liberating, invigorating landscape which they simultaneously control and symbolize. By juxtaposing Jewett and King, and Wharton and Straub in this way, this chapter demonstrates the ubiquity of such obfuscation and, perhaps most importantly, highlights the extent to which late twentieth-century horror texts have employed it in the service of plots that veer uncomfortably close to celebrating misogynistic violence.

THE GENDERED AMERICAN LANDSCAPE

The relationship between rigidly distinguished, heteronormative gender roles and the American landscape is arguably most famously articulated in Frederick Jackson Turner's "Frontier Thesis," in which he asserted that the Frontier, the point at which the inexorable westward movement of Anglo-European exploration and civilization met the uncharted wastes of the virgin forest, trackless wilderness, or boundless prairie, was "a military training school, [...] developing the stalwart and rugged qualities of the frontiersman" (Jackson Turner 1920, p. 15).² Undeterred by the official "closing" of the Frontier in 1890, such individualistic hardiness and a love of freedom and unrestricted movement have, for many commentators, remained integral attributes of the idealized American male subject.³ At the same time, a strictly opposed set of attributes were associated with women and femininity, which effectively became synonymous with domestic existence, sedentary lifestyles, and the restrictions imposed by societal rules and norms. Consequently, in order to preserve their masculine independence, the heroes of American literature (from Washington Irving's Rip Van Winkle through James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking, to Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn and beyond) are united, not merely by their rugged, outdoorsy manliness but also by a predisposition to "light out for the territories" as soon as it looks as if some woman might want to tie them down.⁴ As Marilyn Chandler argues, American "definitions of freedom," which "emphasize Thoreauvian autonomy and separateness from social constraint," lead to the equation of civilization with "loss of innocence, corruption, effeminacy, and diminishment [...]" (Chandler 1991, p. 20). The result was a proliferation of depictions of women as avatars of the "Great Mother," a s/mothering, cloying force of repressive domesticity, whose primary function is "fixation and not releasing what aspires toward independence and freedom"—that is, the masculine subject (Neumann 1955, pp. 65–66).⁵

Within this conceptual framework, a significant proportion of American gothic and horror fiction reverses the gender dynamic conventionally found in the works of Ann Radcliffe and her inheritors. In place of sexually threatening villains imprisoning frightened heroines in their crumbling aristocratic mansions, American gothic frequently positions male characters as struggling to escape the clutches of women depicted as smothering, demonic, and, consequently, as legitimate targets for (allegedly defensive) violence.⁶ In such texts, however, the structural oppositions "man/women" and "landscape/house" do not necessarily map neatly onto one another, and it is here that matters become more complex. Malevolent female figures don't always stay safely indoors the way Mary Pask does but instead blur uncomfortably with the very great outdoors of which they are supposedly the antithesis. Indeed, writers such as Annette Kolodny and Kathleen Kirby have argued that the figurative association between femininity and the landscape underpins the very drive to explore and conquer that defines the American masculine ideal (Kirby 1996, p. 100; Kolodny 1975, p. 9).

This is, in many ways, precisely what happens in Henry David Thoreau's auto-biographical essay "Ktaadn" (1864). Far from the ecstatic communion with nature that normally characterizes his writings, on this occasion, Thoreau's hike up the eponymous mountain in Bangor, Maine (now known as Mount Katahdin) seems to have left him more than a little spooked. Here, he wrote, "[v]ast, Titanic, inhuman Nature [...] does not smile on [the visitor] as in the plains. She seems to say sternly, why came ye here before your time? This ground is not prepared for you. [...] Shouldst thou freeze or starve, or shudder thy life away, here is no shrine, nor altar, nor any access to my ear" (Thoreau 1864, p. 64). In American horror fiction, this figurative connection—between a sense of some places as being fundamentally *wrong* and figures of feminine malevolence such as Thoreau's wrathful Nature—is dramatized again and again. The work of H.P. Lovecraft is fairly representative in this regard, and his stories repeatedly superimpose the harsh landscape of the American east coast with evil female presences.⁷ In "The Dunwich Horror" (1928), the story of a monstrous birth and the monstrous maternal body that makes it possible, we are told that

[n]o one, even those who have the facts concerning the recent horror, can say just what is the matter with Dunwich; though old legends speak of unhallowed rites and conclaves of the Indians, amidst which they called forbidden shapes of shadow out of the great rounded hills, and made wild orgiastic prayers that were answered by loud crackings and rumblings from the ground below. (Lovecraft 1993, p. 183)

These folk tales revolve primarily around "foul odours near the hill-crowning circles of stone pillars," and a place dubbed "the Devil's Hop Yard—a bleak, blasted hillside where no tree, shrub, or grass-blade will grow" (Lovecraft 1993, p. 183). In much the same way, in "The Dreams in the Witch House" (1932), the protagonist Gilman's dreams of, and later fatal encounter with, an "evil, sardonic [...] beldame" are closely associated with vertiginous visions of "plunges through limitless abysses of inexplicably coloured twilight and bafflingly disordered sound; abysses whose material and gravitational properties, and whose relation to his own entity, he could not even begin to explain" (Lovecraft 1993, p. 268). While appalled and indeed endangered by the satanic rites practiced by Keziah Mason, a remnant of the Salem Witch Trials of 1692, Gilman nevertheless remains in the house until it kills him, fatally fascinated by the increasingly bizarre dream world presided over by the immortal witch. Here, then, as in the Thoreau passage quoted above, dangerous spaces are depicted as hostile to the male traveler, but, contrary to the relationships dramatized in Wharton's "Miss Mary Pask," they are not opposed to the horribly seductive woman, but rather an extension of her power over the protagonist.

The same dynamic underpins "The Thing on the Doorstep," in which the enigmatic Asenath Waite first enthralls and then traps in marriage the narrator's

friend Edward Derby, in order to fulfill by supernatural means her raging desire to become a man. Edward, who like Gilman seems strangely unwilling to escape from her toils, tells the narrator

about terrible meetings in lonely places, of Cyclopean ruins in the heart of the Maine woods beneath which vast staircases led down to abysses of nighted secrets, of complex angles that led through invisible walls to other regions of space and time, and of hideous exchanges of personality that permitted explorations in remote and forbidden places, on other worlds, and in different space-time continua. (Lovecraft 1993, p. 301)

As matters escalate, the narrator is called by a town marshal to “the wildest, deepest, and least explored forest belt in Maine, and it took a whole day of feverish jolting through fantastic and forbidding scenery to get there in a car” (302). It is ultimately revealed that Asenath’s body has been possessed by the spirit of her father, who then jumps bodies into Edward’s, an operation that causes it to dissolve into the shapeless “Thing” of the title. The story’s locus of fear is, however, undeniably Asenath herself, her disturbingly attractive, predatory femininity, and her alignment with the barely navigable Maine landscape, which either conveniently mirrors or is further distorted by her. At the same time, “The Thing on the Doorstep” is marked by a further set of associations—between male characters in mortal peril and the loosening of homosocial bonds by heterosexual couplings. As the rest of this chapter demonstrates, this narrative structure (in which close-knit groups of men are endangered by a feminized landscape to which they are nonetheless irresistibly attracted) has been central to a variety of gothic and horror texts from the United States and especially in texts that revolve around gendered violence.

STEPHEN KING AND THE GODDESS

As mentioned above, this trope is identifiable in American texts by male and female writers alike, and in enumerating these texts, a notable pattern emerges—of twentieth-century male horror writers directly echoing imagery and indeed plots from women writing almost a hundred years previously.⁸ Perhaps the most immediately obvious example is King’s story “Mrs. Todd’s Shortcut” (1984). Ophelia Todd is a holiday maker in a small town in Maine who is obsessed with finding shortcuts. She persuades Homer Buckland, a man from the area, to drive with her on a new route she has discovered, and as he sits beside her, he tells his friend the narrator that he “started to feel like we had gone back in time, and there wasn’t *nothing*. That if we stopped and I climbed a high tree, I wouldn’t see nothing in any direction but woods and woods and more woods [...]” (King 2004, p. 223). He quickly loses their place on the map, and before long the trees seem to come to life, bending their branches to snatch at the car, which only makes Mrs. Todd (who seems to be a Diana-like goddess) laugh delightedly. As Homer tells the narrator many years later, after Mrs. Todd has

gone missing, “There was something wild that crept into her face, Dave—something *wild* and something *free*, and it frightened my heart. She was beautiful, [...] but I was scairt *of* her too, because she looked like she could kill you if her eye left the road and fell on you and she decided to love you back” (p. 222, italics in original). Homer eventually disappears, abandoning his friend and his mundane, small-town existence in the company of what seems to be an improbably youthful Mrs. Todd. Here, then, the dangerous, supernatural woman embodies *both* the frightening elements of the landscape *and* the earlier American rhetoric that asserted that exploring the wilderness was liberating for men. Neither fear, however, is fully exorcised by this apparently optimistic conclusion, and the bulk of the description falls on the unease and ill-advised desire that Mrs. Todd and the Maine woods inspire equally, rendering her the direct descendent of Lovecraft’s Asenath Waite.

Mrs. Ophelia Todd’s literary lineage can, however, also be traced back to Mrs. Almira Todd from Sarah Orne Jewett’s “Dunnet Landing” stories, also set in Maine. Jewett’s Mrs. Todd is a vaguely witch-like figure, albeit a benevolent one, and acts as landlady to the female narrator, who is on holiday there from Boston (Crow 2009, pp. 67–68).⁹ Their friendship is built on gardening, storytelling, and rambling around the local area, activities that Mrs. Todd fuses into vehicles for lessons on folklore, herb lore, and tolerance and understanding. It is in “The Queen’s Twin” (1899) that Mrs. Todd’s otherworldly qualities are brought most clearly to the fore. The narrator remarks that

[l]ife was very strong in [Mrs Todd], as if some force of Nature were personified in this simple-hearted woman and gave her cousinship to the ancient deities. She might have walked the primeval fields of Sicily; her strong gingham skirts might at that very moment bend the slender stalks of asphodel and be fragrant with trodden thyme, instead of the brown wind-brushed grass of New England and frost-bitten goldenrod. (Jewett 1899, p. 18)

The journey that inspires these thoughts occurs when Mrs. Todd (who here resembles Thoreau’s Nature in one of her less formidable moods) and the narrator head off along an ancient “Indian” path through the woods to visit the women of the title, who believes herself to be the twin of Queen Victoria of England. Like Thoreau, Jewett’s narrator, despite her confidence in Mrs. Todd, begins to perceive a “persistence and savagery about the sturdy little trees that put weak human nature at complete defiance,” which inspires “a sudden pity for the men and women who had been worsted after a long fight in that lonely place” and “a sudden fear of the unconquerable, immediate forces of Nature, as in the irresistible moment of a thunderstorm” (Jewett 1899, pp. 16–17). Nor is the narrator alone in her fears; Mrs. Todd tells her,

“I can recollect the time when folks were shy o’ these woods we just come through,” said Mrs. Todd seriously. “The men-folks themselves never ’d venture into ’em alone [...]. They said a person was liable to get bewildered in there

alone, and in old times folks had been lost. I expect there was considerable fear left over from the old Indian times, and the poor days o' witchcraft; anyway, I've seen bold men act kind o' timid. [...] Some folks is born afraid of the woods and all wild places, but I must say they've always been like home to me." (Jewett 1899, pp. 17–18)

As a likely source for King's story, Jewett's Mrs. Todd, with her expert knowledge of both past terrors and present protective charms and cures, simultaneously gives form to and allays the fears that such a hazardous, confusing landscape arouses. In much of King's shorter fiction, by contrast, the demonization of women is more straightforward, while the relationship between men and landscape remains profoundly ambivalent. His work repeatedly implies that, unlike the divine Mrs. Todd, most women are agents of restriction, preventing men from attaining the freedom that is their national birthright. Arguably the best-known examples are the dead woman in the bathtub in Room 217 in *The Shining* (1977), who seeks, siren-like, to embrace men in her slimy arms, and Annie Wilkes in *Misery* (1987), who imprisons and hobbles a male writer with whom she is obsessed. King's short stories are, if anything, even more explicit in this regard. One male character remarks, "[i]f you had a woman, you'd never go out west. What a woman does is keep a man from getting any further west. That's how they operate. That is their mission" (King 2004, p. 481). Similarly, in "Beachworld" (1985), when the crew of a spaceship crash-land on a planet that is nothing but sand, one of the characters imagines it as whispering, "[w]ants to suck you down, Bill, [...]". In his mind it was the dry, arid voice of a woman who was old but still terribly strong. *Wants to suck you right down here and give you a great ... big ... hug*" (King 2004, p. 363, italics in original). Women, in other words, will stop you from exploring, but exploring itself can also be terrifying, precisely because those terrifying spaces are insistently coded as feminine.

This idea is dramatized more fully in "One for the Road" (1977), which lingers upon the vampirization of the wife of a family who stumbles into Salem's Lot, sometime after the events of the 1975 novel of the same name. The woman is transformed into an alluring succubus, seeking to drain the blood from any man who comes near her, but specifically from her own husband, so as to ensure that he never leaves the town again. The male narrator recounts how

[s]he looked up at us and grinned. And when she did, I felt my longing, my yearning turn to horror as cold as the grave, as white and silent as bones in a shroud. Even from the rise we could see the sullen red glare in those eyes. They were less human than a wolf's eyes. And when she grinned you could see how long her teeth had become. She wasn't human any more. She was a dead thing somehow come back to life in this black howling storm. (King 1978, p. 390)

Her husband "tried to back away from her, but her arms, long and bare and as white as snow, snaked out and pulled him to her" (p. 390). She is figured here

as precisely that horrific feminine force that prevents men from moving on, and yet, as this passage suggests, she is also figuratively or even supernaturally aligned with the weather and the spaces around her, which should offer unlimited movement, but which, in their wildness and hostility, ultimately imprison and kill.

Something similar occurs in King's "Nona" (1978), which opens with a man's dream of a beautiful woman. He feels "dread, revulsion, unutterable longing," but as he goes to kiss her, "[h]er hair grows coarse and matted, melting from black to an ugly brown that spills down over the creamy whiteness of her cheeks. The eyes shrink and go beady [...] like two polished pieces of jet. The mouth becomes a maw through which crooked yellow teeth protrude." In short, she has become "a huge, noisome graveyard rat" (King 2004, pp. 390–391). As with so many of King's male characters, the narrator repeatedly expresses a dread of women as grasping destroyers of men's independence, stating, "[y]ou show me a married man or a man with a steady woman, and I'll show you someone who is asking himself [...] *How much of me has she got? How much is left?*" (King 2004, p. 405). The narrator begins to see all women as rats, preying on helpless men, and yet his time with Nona leads him to kill other men, violently and suddenly. Even as he becomes the predator, however, the story continues to figure predation as inherently female, linked repeatedly to the damp earth in his foster mother's root cellar and enclosing tombs filled with vermin. This element—the turn to violence, somehow justified by depicting women as monstrous enemies to men's freedom (and more frequently wielded against women themselves)—is, as the next section demonstrates, central to late twentieth-century manifestations of the man-woman-landscape dynamic I have been describing.

A GROUP OF MEN WALK THROUGH SNOW TO DISCUSS A GHOST

Peter Straub's *Ghost Story* is a useful example of a horror novel that dramatizes but also engages with the problems inherent in depicting troubling homosocial violence against perceived female supernatural threats. Like King's story, Straub's source material may also be the work of an earlier female writer who actively critiques such violence. Specifically, *Ghost Story* appears to draw upon Wharton's "Bewitched" (1925), which features an especially repugnant avatar of the Great Mother in the form of Mrs. Rutledge, a cold, controlling woman, who believes her husband to be under a spell that compels him to indulge in clandestine meetings with the ghost of a dead local girl named Ora Brand. Mrs. Rutledge—whose obsession catalyzes what seems to be the fatal shooting of Ora's sister, Venny (mistaken for her sister's ghost, though this is never rendered explicit)—is described as having a face which metonymizes her desire to fence in her husband and his movements, "so limited was its scope, so fixed were its features" (Wharton 1975, p. 165). The story, therefore, produces a

double specter of constricting femininity—first via Ora’s vampiric hold over Saul Rutledge, luring him, he admits, to a deserted hovel again and again to meet with her, and second, via Mrs. Rutledge herself, who exerts a similar stranglehold over her husband. In positioning Venny Brand, rather than Saul, as the ultimate victim of this triangulated desire, “Bewitched” effectively critiques both the jealousy and competition among women built into heterosexual marriage, and the devastating effects for women of lingering folk beliefs about witches.

It also provides an image that is central to the portrayal of feminine evil in Straub’s *Ghost Story*. The novel revolves around the male characters’ periodic (and invariably horrific) encounters with a series of mysterious young women, who, we are led to believe, are actually all the same person. Introduced as Eva Galli, and later appearing as Alma Mobley, Anna Mostyn, and others, she is apparently responsible for the deaths of several men and, it is hinted, is some sort of hybrid monster, able to take on the appearance of a range of beautiful women but reverting to a state of gelatinous abjection while asleep. This is revealed slowly, however, and the initial intrusion of strangeness into the town of Milburn occurs via a scene almost identical to the opening of Wharton’s story. In both, a group of men, important figures in their small communities, trudge through a winter-bound landscape to an isolated farm, in order to investigate tracks in the snow. Ora’s father and a group of local men in various positions of authority in Wharton’s tale take a set of footprints in the snow at the Rutledge farm as a sign that the dead do in fact “walk,” leading them to investigate further. By contrast, in Straub’s novel, a *lack* of prints deepens the mystery surrounding a spate of local sheep killings that a farmer calls the main male characters (also local authority figures) to inspect, in the hope of finding a perpetrator. The dual associations from Wharton’s story (women as enemies of men’s freedom and women as hapless victims of marital anger and superstition) hang over this scene and are undeniably played out in the rest of Straub’s novel.

The book as a whole traces a trajectory from depicting the landscape as holding out possibilities for escape and individual freedom, to asserting something far more sinister. Lewis Benedikt, one of the men targeted by the murderous female creature, likes to run in the woods surrounding his house, allowing him to luxuriate in the “illusion that he was the only white man on a densely-wooded continent” (Straub 1988, p. 319). We are told,

Lewis running liked to think of the huge climax forest that had once blanketed nearly all of North America; a vast belt of trees and vegetation, silent wealth through which moved only himself and Indians. And a few spirits. Yes in an endless vault of forest you could believe in spirits. Indian mythology was full of them—they suited the landscape. But now, in a world of Burger Kings and Piggly Wiggly supermarkets and Pitch ’n Put golf courses, all the old tyrannical ghosts must have been crowded out. *They aren’t crowded out yet, Lewis. Not yet.* (Straub 1988, p. 93, italics in original)

In this passage, Lewis begins as the lord of the forest, reveling in fantasies of an empty landscape that he commands. These very fantasies, however, soon themselves become a source of uneasy fear, and the book as a whole can be read as an effort both to express and to dispel this fear through images of violence against demonic female figures. As the evil gains greater and greater control over the town, the weather deteriorates rapidly, to the point where

[f]or the first time in most of their lives, Millburn people saw the weather as malevolent, a hostile force that would kill them if they let it. [...] if you stayed outside for much longer than it took to run from your car to your house, you could hear the wind chuckling in your inner ear, knowing that it had you where it wanted you. That was one enemy, the worst they knew. [...] Only four people knew the identity of an enemy more hostile than the murderous weather. (Straub 1988, p. 393)

While such passages attempt to distinguish the enemy from the weather itself, as in King's "One For the Road," the book's figurative range repeatedly conflates them; one becomes a sign of and vehicle for the workings of the other, as "whatever it was [...] could move freely around Millburn in this weather [...]" (Straub 1988, p. 435). On the one hand, the snow and the landscape it blankets appear to harbor some malign intelligence: "It seemed that if you listened to that snow hissing long enough, you wouldn't just hear it telling you that it was waiting for you, you'd hear some terrible secret—a secret to turn your life black" (p. 434). On the other hand, Alma Mobley's minion, the lycanthropic Gregory Bates, is described as having eyes that project a "total mindlessness, a rushing violence, pure cold, a killing wind through the forest"—in other words, the weather is evil in itself, *and* the evil invading the town is almost identical both to the weather and the landscape it affects (p. 454).

At the same time, Anna Mostyn is depicted as a stereotypical avatar of the Great Mother. Two teenage boys attempt to break into her strangely deserted house to spy on the attractive newcomer, who is posing as a legal secretary. The reluctant Peter looks in the window of the house, and sees

a bare room where the carpet had been taken up and invisible dust lay everywhere. On the other side, the black arch of a doorway; on his side, the reflection of his own face, looking out from the glass.

He felt for a second the terror of being trapped in there like his reflection, of being forced to go through the doorway, to walk the bare floorboards [...]. (Straub 1988, p. 283)

Mostyn and her supernatural followers, Gregory and Fenny Bate, subsequently kill Peter's more assertive friend, Jim Hardie, before moving on to the townsfolk more generally, but focusing their malevolence on the group of men who investigate the sheep mutilations in the snow. It transpires that this is in revenge for a horrific incident that occurred when the men were young. When the men tell Don (the nephew of their friend who dies early on in the book) what hap-

pened the night that Eva Galli (a mysterious, attractive older woman who had bewitched them and the whole of Millburn during their youth) died, one of them, Sears James, recalls her angry, lascivious behavior leading up to her death. He says, “[t]here was our unattainable goddess, cursing like a sailor and raging ... acting like a whore. [...] we had never seen a woman act that way, and for us she was, you know, sort of a cross between the Statue of Liberty and Mary Pickford” (Straub 1988, p. 372). When she begins to strip and attempt to seduce Lewis, a struggle ensues, she hits her head on the fireplace, and they are left with a body, “[n]aked and dead,” a scenario which results in the men feeling “defeated by her—she had won. [...] Her hatred had provoked us to something very like murder [...]” (pp. 374–375). What happens here is that a beautiful, quasi-divine woman (like King’s Mrs. Todd) steps off her pedestal; not only are the men devastated, but they rapidly recast themselves as her victims at precisely the moment that they effectively murder her. Indeed, elsewhere in the novel, threats to the group’s integrity repeatedly inspire thoughts of misogynistic violence. When Lewis hears that another member of the group, John Jaffrey, has thrown himself off the bridge, “[f]or some reason, he wished that he had hit a girl with his car—it was only a moment’s wish, but it would have meant that John was safe” (p. 173). In other words, “the other, unknowable half of the species” are a kind of scapegoat in the novel; women are made to suffer (even if only imaginatively) when the men feel that their friendship and their bond is destabilized in some way (p. 54).

It would seem, however, that the book is itself well aware of the problems inherent in the use of Anna Mostyn as a whipping post for a group of men, racked with guilt, grief, various addictions, and creeping old age, who find themselves stuck in a small town during a snowstorm. The novel does provide some persuasive evidence that “A.M.” is indeed behind the deaths of Don’s uncle and brother, as well as John Jaffrey, Jim Hardie, Lewis Benedikt, and many more. However, when she seems to take the form of a little girl, who Don kidnaps and tries to convince himself he must kill, it becomes clear that the uncomfortable proximity between ridding the world of demonic evil and killing appealing women and girls is a major thematic element of the book itself. This is not to exonerate the novel’s deeply problematic gender politics, but it does suggest that, not unlike Wharton’s story, Straub’s novel both perpetuates and critiques the confluence of homosocial bonds, hostile landscape, and supernaturally frightening women that underpins so much American horror fiction.

CONCLUSION

What I would like to suggest overall is that, in the texts I have been discussing, avatars of feminine malevolence effectively serve both to symbolize and to distract attention away from “the long tradition in American gothic of attributing terrible violence to the muteness of landscape” (Savoy 1998, p. 9). Eric Savoy has noted that the gothic as a genre is marked by a “tendency to generate an allegorical sign—a human agency” to fill the voids opened up by nameless terror. In this

case, that terror is inspired by the void that is the American landscape, one that resists being named, mapped, understood, or even fully conquered (p. 10). Such resistance effectively suggests a failure on the part of the American masculine subject to fulfill his role in the myth of the conquering of the American wilderness. The result, in Judith Fetterley's words, is "a national narrative that valorizes violence, that defines masculinity as the production of violence, and defines the feminine and the foreign as legitimate recipients of such violence" (1998, p. 30). As this chapter suggests, however, while horror fiction is in many ways the most explicit and often the most troubling manifestation of such violence, it also contains within itself the possibility for critique and even for resistance.

NOTES

1. See Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800–1890* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998).
2. See also Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), 293.
3. See R.W.B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), and John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979).
4. See Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1978), 54, for a more detailed discussion of these issues.
5. See also Judith Fryer, *The Faces of Eve: Women in the Nineteenth Century American Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).
6. See Susan S. Williams, *Reclaiming Authorship: Literary Women in America, 1850–1900* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 14–15.
7. A full explanation of New England's (and particularly Maine's) fictional status as a locus of horror is beyond the scope of this essay. See, for example, Faye Ringel, *New England's Gothic Literature: History and Folklore of the Supernatural from the Seventeenth Through Twentieth Centuries* (Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995).
8. For further examples of the trope in work by women from the long nineteenth century, see Louisa May Alcott, "A Pair of Eyes, or, Modern Magic," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* 17, no. 421 (24 October 1863), and 17, no. 422 (31 October 1863); Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Home: Its Work and Influence* (New York and Oxford: AltaMira Press, 2002), 284; and Wharton, "The Lady's Maid's Bell," in *Ghost Stories*, 22.
9. See also J. Samaine Lockwood, *Archives of Desire: The Queer Historical Work of New England Regionalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 87.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alcott, Louisa May. 1863. A Pair of Eyes, or, Modern Magic. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* 17 (421): 69–71; and 17 (422): 85–87.
- Chandler, Marilyn. 1991. *Dwelling in the Text*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Crow, Charles L. 2009. *American Gothic*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Faragher, J. M. (1979). *Women and Men on the Overland Trail*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Fetterley, Judith. 1998. 'Not in the Least American': Nineteenth-Century Literary Regionalism as UnAmerican Literature. In *Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers: A Critical Reader*, ed. Karen J. Kilcup, 15–32. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Fryer, Judith. 1976. *The Faces of Eve: Women in the Nineteenth Century American Novel*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. 2002. *The Home: Its Work and Influence*. Oxford: AltaMira Press.
- Jewett, Sarah Orne. 1899. The Queen's Twin. In *The Queen's Twin and Other Stories*, 1–37. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co.
- King, Stephen. 1978. *Night Shift*. Kent: Hodder and Stoughton.
- . 2004. *Skeleton Crew*. London: Time Warner.
- Kirby, Kathleen M. 1996. *Indifferent Boundaries: Spatial Concepts of Human Subjectivity*. London: Guilford Press.
- Kolodny, Annette. 1975. *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Lewis, R.W.B. 1955. *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lockwood, J. Samaine. 2015. *Archives of Desire: The Queer Historical Work of New England Regionalism*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Lovecraft, H.P. 1993. *Crawling Chaos: Selected Works, 1920–1935*. Edited by Colin Wilson. London: Creation Press.
- Neumann, Erich. 1955. *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*. Translated by Ralph Manheim. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ringel, Faye. 1995. *New England's Gothic Literature: History and Folklore of the Supernatural from the Seventeenth Through Twentieth Centuries*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press.
- Savoy, Eric. 1998. The Face of the Tenant: A Theory of American Gothic. In *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative*, ed. Robert K. Martin and Eric Savoy, 3–19. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.
- Slotkin, Richard. 1998. *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800–1890*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
- . 2000. *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Smith, Henry Nash. 1978. *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*. Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press.
- Straub, Peter. 1988. *Ghost Story*. London: Futura.
- Thomas, Jennice G. 1991. 'Spook or Spinster?': Edith Wharton's 'Miss Mary Pask. In *Haunting the House of Fiction: Feminist Perspectives on Ghost Stories by American Women*, ed. Lynette Carpenter and Wendy K. Kolmar, 108–116. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
- Thoreau, Henry David. 1864. Ktaadn. In *The Maine Woods*, 1–86. Boston: Ticknor and Fields.
- Turner, Frederick Jackson. 1920. The Significance of the Frontier in American History. In *The Frontier in American History*, 1–38. New York: Henry Holt.
- Wharton, Edith. 1975. *The Ghost Stories of Edith Wharton*. London: Constable.
- Williams, Susan S. 2006. *Reclaiming Authorship: Literary Women in America, 1850–1900*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.



Blood Flows Freely: The Horror of Classic Fairy Tales

Lorna Piatti-Farnell

The recent popular culture scope has been copiously populated with cinematic and television revivals of seemingly well-known fairy tales. From successful serialized examples such as *Once Upon a Time* (2011–2018) and *Grimm* (2011–2017), to acclaimed film adaptations such as Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (2017), the re-discovery and impact of the fairy tale upon the current Western psyche is difficult to question. The contemporary observer will be familiar with the Disney-style chronicles of princesses, magic, anthropomorphism, and happy endings, which have become almost synonymous with the re-envisioning and re-conceptualization of the fairy tale as an innocent narrative for children. And yet, before Disney established its own brand of family-friendly accounts, fairy tales were well-attuned to mature concerns, and flourished in the broader corollary of pre-1900 literature. Inspired by centuries of folklore and oral histories, fairy tales proposed disturbing narratives of alienation, entrapment, illicit desires, and perversions, where the magical element often channeled liminal states of existence and the complicated notion of 'evil'. This conceptualization of the horror element allows for a re-discovery of the "dark side of children's fairy tales" as connected to notions of not only narrative and genre, but also of identity and culture (Compore 2016, p. 85).

From the much-loved *Mother Goose* stories of Charles Perrault (1697) and the influential narratives of Giambattista Basile (1634), to the later writings of Jean-Marie Leprince de Beaumont (1740), Hans Christian Andersen (1837), and the Brothers Grimm (1812)—as distinctly unsanitized as these latter sto-

L. Piatti-Farnell (✉)
Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand

ries are—fairy tales were pervasively gruesome in nature and abounded with nightmarish stories of blood, dismemberment, horrific body modifications, and brutality. Taking this grisly connection as a point of departure, and providing both a survey and a critical analysis of salient and well-known examples, this chapter explores the place occupied by pre-1900 published fairy tales within the framework of horror literature. As the critical eye is turned onto horror preoccupations, the distinctly educational nature of fairy tale is also exposed as inherently connected to “hidden and forbidden desires,” which, as Daniel Olson suggests, are successfully exposed through the exploitation of “horror, terror and fear” (2011, p. xxvi). While accepting the transnational and transhistorical value of storytelling, this chapter uncovers how pre-1900 fairy tales afford us a veritable narrative repository for the darkest recesses of the human mind, where metaphorical incarnations of violence, torture, hunger, and greed expose the polymorphous layers of cultural and social anxieties.

A starting point for critical exploration must be the identification of what is actually meant when the term ‘fairy tale’ is used. Unfortunately, a comprehensive definition still eludes scholars, as many facets comprising storytelling, authorship, origin, and content often converge and hinder the construction of a single and authoritative delineation for the fairy tale category. Discussing the classification of fairy tales as such, Hilda Davidson and Anna Chaudhri suggest that one way to navigate the categorizational meanderings of these narratives could be to draw a “distinction” between “the oral fairy tale, recorded with various degrees of accuracy,” and the “literary fairy tale, the individual creative work of a writer” (2003, p. 1). In spite of this seemingly persuasive approach, however, it is often not only impractical but also virtually impossible to separate the two, as many examples of written literary fairy tales have been known to be influenced by the oral tradition, even when this connection is not necessarily acknowledged. As far as fairy tales are concerned, the literary and the oral “constantly overlap,” with significant changes being made in the literary transposition of the oral tales—as it is often the case with the works by the Brothers Grimm—in order to “accord better” with the popular taste of the time when they were recorded (Davidson and Chaudhri 2003, p. 1). To provide a counter-argument for classification, one might be tempted to select readership as an important part in the definition of what the fairy tale does; indeed, fairy tales are often thought of as being aimed at children. Even this line of thought, however, proves problematic, as the exchange between the oral and the literary—including the distinct elements of folklore that the fairy tale incorporates—often negates the possibility of identifying a single receivership and readership group, even when the tales appear as published literary works, rather than as delivered to a live audience. As Marina Warner suggests, “fairy tales act as an airy suspension bridge, swinging lightly under different breezes of opinion and economy, between the earned, literary, and print culture in which famous fairy tales have come down to us, and the oral illiterate people’s culture” (1994, p. 24).

In view of these contrasting critical perspectives and the difficulty of categorizing the fairy tale as such, a working definition may be given here, which echoes Jack Zipes's suggestion that, although there is no such a thing as a universal fairy tale, during its "long evolution, the literary fairy tale distinguished itself as genre by appropriating motifs, signs, and drawing from folklore, and embellishing them" (2015, p. xvii). Without necessarily indulging in a strict and overly systematic Proppian categorization of plot and characters, the common elements of the fairy tale can often be grouped together as containing magic—in its various incarnations—the presence of mythical and often monstrous creatures, the setting in faraway lands, quests for glory and riches, and, often inevitably, the appearance of princes and princesses (Propp 1999). For the purpose of this chapter, the focus will be placed on what is known as the "Golden Age of fairy tales," also known as "classic" fairy tales, which blossomed in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and encompassed, perhaps most famously, the work of the Grimms and Andersen, and counted stories that have now become part of the broader literary repertoire of Western tradition (Zipes 2013). Fairy tales are considered here to be narratives of "interplay and influence," operating not as a strict genre in themselves, but as integrating narrative aspects from a variety of literary strands and oral traditions (Davidson and Chaudhri 2003, p. 2). It is in this conceptual flexibility and narrative interplay that the connection between horror and fairy tales becomes meaningful, as elements of horror in the fairy tale do not exist as part of a genre-bending practice, but rather incorporate the magic—for lack of a better word—and fascination of capturing different aspects of the human condition, while not negating the darker and more sinister sides of the human psyche.

The alignment of fairy tales with the rubric of horror may, at first glance, appear to be a peculiar move. Fairy tales and horror have developed, both in terms of literary categorization and in connection to the tropic devices that construct them, as distinctly cataloguable entities. As two markedly delineated literary traditions, fairy tales and horror do not ostensibly share aims and objectives, and do not—at least inasmuch as the general expectations of the reading public are concerned—hold similar grounds in terms of readership and receivership. And yet, elements of horror can be clearly identified within the narrative structure of traditional fairy tales, especially those belonging to the pre-1900 era. Scholarship has not been remiss in uncovering the elements of terror and fear that are often proper to fairy tales; these attempts, however, are primarily sited within the realm of Gothic Studies. And, while the separation between Gothic and horror is in itself problematic, the scholarship takes a clearer stance of working on the fairy tale as connected to the Gothic literary tradition, where elements of horror—especially in physical terms—do not necessarily feature. Lucie Armitt suggests that, on the surface, "the possibility of an inter-relational reading of fairy tale and Gothic modes may appear anomalous"; instead of "the sinister ambivalence of the Gothic narrative," the seemingly "playful fantasies

of the formulaic fairy tale appear to refute the possibility of reader disturbance in prioritizing consolation" (2009, p. 135). Indeed, the fulcrum point of fairy tales consistently returns, across the board, to the desire to impart wisdom to children over real-life dilemmas, and does not seem overly concerned with the construction of dark and gloomy atmospheres, with all their uncanny connections, in the manner that a Gothic tale would.

All the same, in spite of the apparent disconnection between fairy tales and the Gothic horror tradition, several intersecting elements—concerning not only plot and characterization but also the conceptual and emotional reactions on which the narrative pivots—can be identified between the two rubrics. Laurence Talairach-Vielmas suggests that fairy tales often present “a plot revolving around female identity through marriage, thereby recalling prototypical Gothic tales” (2007, p. 160). In similar vein, Gothic narratives—especially from the early era—propose “metaphors of entrapment and literal imprisonment,” which, like traditional fairy tales, “frame the heroine’s experience through powerlessness” (Talairach-Vielmas 2007, p. 160). This conceptual connection might not be too difficult to imagine, if one considers the chronological timeframe of both classic fairy tales and early Gothic narratives, as the two share the same historical context in a number of instances.

Notions of entrapment are particularly noticeable in fairy tales, further constructing a conceptual connection to the Gothic horror framework, especially when female characters are concerned. One should only consider the impact of well-known tales such as “Hansel and Gretel”—with its often-unaddressed murder house—as well as other examples, such as “Cinderella,” “Little Red Riding Hood,” and “Snow White,” to see the prevalence of Gothic motifs, which specifically recall those elements of fear, imprisonment, and torture that we recognize in horror narratives of the contemporary era. Susanne Becker has traced the narrative trajectory of the female space in Gothic horror narratives, claiming that it “always confronted forms of enclosure,” where notions of “ideological containment” characterize the “thematic confinement of the female subject within the house” (Becker 1999, p. 19). In spite of the contemporary desire—undoubtedly aided by the myriad of Disney adaptations and incarnations—to view fairy tales as narratives of innocence, one would be hard pressed not to recognize the horror—both physical and psychological—of the rape account in “Sleeping Beauty,” where the title character is sexually abused by the prince while she is deep in her forced magical slumber. Equally, it would be difficult to forget the murderous intents of the Evil Queen in “Snow White,” or the abuse inflicted on Cinderella by her step-mother, and the isolation suffered by Belle in the Beast’s residence in the eponymous tale. Reaching back even further into the folkloric traditions of fairy tales, it would continue to be unwise to forget the entrapment and eventual murder that encompass the narrative of “Bluebeard,” especially as relayed by Perrault (1697).

LESSON IN VIOLENCE

Traditionally, fairy tales have existed as part of a pedagogical framework aimed at children. Joseph Abbruscato suggests that “the strength of fairy tales lies in their ability to deliver their psychically important lessons, their epiphanies and teaching moments, in as concise package as possible” (2014, p. 6). A distinctly identifiable characteristic of the fairy tales has been the pervasive use of the magical elements, often coupled with the inclusion of monstrous creatures. The fantastical setup of fairy tales proves to be its most useful characteristic, as far as the educational and emotional aims of the narrative are concerned. Both fear and conquering fear—predictably joined with the hero’s ability to overcome adversities, and the inevitable punishment that will befall the villain—lie at the heart of the fairy tale’s setup. According to Karen Coats, fairy tales are important to children’s development because “they provide concrete images of villains and monsters on which to project undirect anxieties and fears, so that they might be contained and dispatched” (2007, p. 78). The stories are distinctly geared toward imparting lessons of conduct and morality in children, as well as developing psychological processes that will facilitate the growth of the young reader into an adult.

Of course, the majority of classic fairy tales hold true to the idea that villains are punished and heroes and heroines rewarded, in keeping with the pedagogical structures that the tales themselves aim to achieve. The moralistic nature of fairy tales incessantly overcomes the presence of horrific body modifications, and often torture, that haunts the narrative, in favor of a system of trial and reward. Indeed, in the fairy tale, anxieties and fears are “transposed” into a “fantasy world, where they become abstract elements that a child can apply to multiple scenarios” (Hunt 2001, p. 16; Abbruscato 2014, p. 6). All the same, in spite of the persuasive nature of the argument connecting fairy tales to happy endings—which undoubtedly channels the knowledge of fairy tales many contemporary readers hold, and is aided clearly by the impact of popular culture in the re-establishment of fairy tales as part of the cinematic structure—one must also be attuned to the fact that a variety of classic fairy tales do not necessarily provide a happy ending for the principal characters, who are left to suffer and often die. One must only think here of “The Little Mermaid,” where the title character’s dreams of obtaining the prince’s love are shattered as he becomes enamored with another, and she inevitably dies a painful death when she is turned into sea foam. In this tale, the heroine’s inability to overcome the actions of villainous counterparts is also enhanced by the addition of physical suffering, as she undergoes the torturous process of feeling as if she is walking on nails, as part of her payment for being allowed to live as a human on land. Here, suffering and bodily pain are at the center of the human experience and its politics of desire.

In spite of their pedagogical aims, the presence of violence in fairy tales from the Golden Age is undeniable. While many of these tales were published as incarnations of previous narratives—like it was in the case of Perrault’s seventeenth-century works and their cultural reformation into the Grimms’ nineteenth-century

fairy tales—this literary transition did not hinder the construction of more bodily centered narratives, where the punishment for villains and wrong-doers, as well as, more often than not, monstrous creatures, most commonly manifests through violent means in the form of torture, abuse, and corporeal dismemberment. These examples from the fairy tale corollary, as Maria Tatar suggests, are often “unabashed in their presentation of blood and gore” (1992, p. 168). Fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm are particularly gruesome in their recounting of both well-known folk tales from the oral tradition and previously published literary stories. A number of tales appear to make a virtue of the horror elements by constructing the body of the punished—either the top villain of the story or, on occasion, the greedy underdog who attempts to steal the hero or heroine’s fortune—as the site of violence and torture. Tales of disfigurement and maiming abound, where “the blood flows freely,” as villainous characters are mutilated and abused, often to the satisfaction of the main characters as well as, suggestively, the reader (Tatar 1992, p. 169).

The Grimms penned a variety of tales where bodily violence constructs the apogee of the educational lesson in the story and is seemingly justified by the receivers’ previous ill conduct and greed; examples such as “Herr Korbes” and “Put the Old Woman in the Furnace” capitalize on horrific bodily treatments in order to impart acts of punishment and forceful justice. And while one may be tempted to think that the presence of violence is confined to lesser-known tales, it is important to remember that the Grimm versions of well-known tales such as “Cinderella” and “Snow White” are steeped in violence and punishment, at the expense of not only the villains but, on occasion, of the heroines as well. Just as Herr Korbes is attacked by creatures in his own house and forced to suffer the pain of “a thousand deaths”, so do the characters in “Cinderella” undergo horrific bodily punishments and, on occasion, self-inflicted bodily torture and dismemberment. In this particular tale, Cinderella’s step-sisters mutilate their own feet in order to attempt to wear the famous shoe. One of the sisters cuts off a number of her toes, while the other chops off the heel of her foot; and although both the sisters’ feet fit in the slipper once mutilated, the conspicuous amounts of blood unfortunately give their plan away. This representation of self-violence is constructed in the Grimms’ tale as a metaphorical rendition of the sisters’ greed and dishonesty, and is not necessarily perceived as a matter of horror. The use of violence in Cinderella continues once the title character finally marries her prince: the sisters wish to walk down the aisle with Cinderella to gain exposure for her glory. However, their continuous greed is punished once again by birds, which pluck the sisters’ eyes out, leaving them blind and exposed to the scorn and ridicule of the community. The bloody and violent end met by the sisters is undoubtedly horrific, but the narrative does not appear to indulge in the description of torture and dismemberment to achieve consternation, like horror narratives commonly would. The reader is never encouraged “to feel sympathy for the pain of the victim”: the gruesome acts suffered by the sisters remain firmly sited in the justice camp,

as violence, blood, and gore are fully justified as part of the moralistic structure that separates good deeds and behaviors from wrongdoing (Tatar 1992, p. 169).

While many modern readers may perceive the treatment of the two sisters in “Cinderella” as acts of violence, these are not necessarily perceived in these terms in the fairy tale itself. Indeed, acts of forced body modification proliferate across the spectrum of fairy tales, but what may often be cataloged as “violence” in general terms, in the fictional world of the fairy tale it is more likely perceived either in terms of necessity or, more likely, fair punishment. The latter, in particular, is not only built on a rubric of physical abuse, but also uncovers how violence is an expected part of the relationship between characters—especially heroes and villains—within the narrative system of the fairy tale. Violence is not presented for its shock value, as it often is in contemporary popular narratives; instead, it becomes an essential part of uncovering the powerful social and psychological relationships that lie at the center of the fairy tale’s educational value. Body horrors, as both a result of greed and as a manifestation of rightful punishment, echo a long-standing anthropological contention, where violence is not separate from the narrative of our everyday, but is, on the other hand, “embedded in our social fabric in manifold ways” (Ray 2011, p. 3). By exposing the presence of bodily horrors in a number of circumstances, fairy tales also normalize violence and re-establish the limits of the body and identity in relation to the individual’s place within the social order. A bifurcation of meaning can be identified here, where violence and brutality are deemed acceptable, as long as the villains are punished. In this, the fairy tale employs the representational rubric of bodily horror, but fails to acknowledge and recognize it as such.

THE THREAT OF CANNIBALISM

A recurrent fear in fairy tales appears to be the threat of cannibalism. This in itself should not come as a surprise, considering the long-standing place that cannibalism has occupied in the Western imagination as a cultural taboo. In this context, cannibalism is conceptually deemed as “unnatural and monstrous” because “it disregards widely accepted norms” within human organization (Brown 2012, p. 4). The threat of cannibalism is highly representative of the dichotomous divide being civilization and barbarity, and continues to operate as a clear boundary marker as far as the safety of the human body is concerned. In fairy tales, children in particular—but not exclusively—are put at risk of being consumed by all manners of monstrous creatures, who eagerly hunt them and imprison them through tricks and irresistible temptations. Indeed, the horrific presence of cannibalism is identifiable across the spectrum of classic fairy tales, from “Snow White”—where the Evil Queen demands to eat the heart of the titular character as proof of the young girl’s death—to “Hansel and Gretel,” whose gingerbread house and hungry, child-eating witch are well-known. The cannibal threat echoes across centuries and national literary spec-

trums as far as fairy tales are concerned, reaching all the way to more folkloristic incarnations, such as “Jack and the Beanstalk,” where the giant’s whimsical words instill fear into the hero’s own heart, as well as the readers: “Fee! Fie! Foe! Fum! I smell the blood of an Englishman. Be he ‘live, or be he dead, I’ll grind his bones to make my bread.”

While cannibalism should not be regarded as a staple feature of fairy tales, its presence is indeed conspicuous across the board and is especially noticeable when coupled with the presence of monstrous creatures. As Carolyn Daniel suggests, “stories about monsters who threaten to consume” are “the mainstay of much grotesque horror fiction aimed at children,” of which fairy tales are a prominent example, both historically and in the contemporary moment (2006, p. 139). The man-eating monsters of fairy tales not only uncover the horror dimension of consumption, but also expose the human entity in the story as vulnerable and subject to gruesome experiences. Daniel further suggests that the cannibal creatures of fairy tales are monstrous because they “act outside of cultural and social prohibitions and represent the antithesis of civilized humanity” (2006, p. 137). Far from claiming the sanitized labels that popular opinion attributes to fairy tales, especially those written by the Grimms, these narratives capitalize on the fear of bodily violation in the most extreme cultural ways, as the human is threatened by the possibility of being the food rather than the eater.

A well-known instance of the inter-relationship among the monstrous, fear, and consumption in fairy tales is to be found in “Little Red Riding Hood,” also known as “Little Red Cap” in the Grimms’ version. The dread of being eaten runs across the narrative of this particular tale and even becomes actualized—at least for a short period of time—as the Wolf manages to consume both the Grandmother and Little Red; his dark deed is then uncovered by the Huntsman, and punished with death—not before, of course, both victims are released, still alive, from the Wolf’s own belly. This well-known ending to the story was the result of several re-writings and re-interpretations that often mixed the Grimms’ own vision with Perrault’s earlier version of the tale. The idea of being consumed by the Wolf sounds horrific enough, but the act takes on an even greater significance if it is viewed in terms of cannibalism. While this conceptualization may appear to be a strange suggestion—as the Wolf is, in fact, an animal and not a human being—it is important to bear in mind the intent of the narrative, common as it is across the fairy tale spectrum, in humanizing the Wolf. Indeed, the Wolf dresses up in Grandma’s clothes and speaks just like a human being. The ‘reality’ of the Wolf as an animal is not addressed in the fairy tale, as his presence—if not his appetite—is fully characterized in anthropomorphic terms. An important element that must be considered here is the propensity for fairy tales to mix the animal with the human, in ways that exceed apparent logic. Kate Bernheimer suggests that in fairy tales “the human and the animal worlds are equal and mutually dependent. The violence, the suffering, and the beauty are shared” (2010, p. xix). In this context, the Wolf’s hunger and desire to consume could be viewed as cannibalistic; as such, they expose the fear of incorporation and dissolution that is proper to the cannibal narrative—at least

as far as the Western psyche is concerned. Cannibalism represents the loss of identity, the fear that comes with being assimilated and non-existing. One can see here how the educational uses of cannibalism in fairy tales become visible, as the threat of being consumed “is deeply seeded in humanity” (Abbruscato 2014, p. 7). Be it evil witches or, as it is the case in *Little Red*, a big bad wolf, “children can place their fears of lacking an identity into the fairy tale” (Abbruscato 2014, p. 8). The horror of cannibalism, interpreted here as personal non-existence, inspires a desire to grow and avoid perils in the young reader; simultaneously, it exposes the effects of the horror narrative in delineating the limits of cultural identity through the exploitation of body politics.

HORROR FAIRY TALES: A POSTSCRIPT

The juxtaposition of Gothic horror and fairy tales exposes a layer of psychological interpretation within children’s narratives that opens the way for discussions of identity, gender, and culture. Of course, this overview of the horror elements in classic fairy tales remains conscious of the fact that the tales themselves did not aim to produce horror effects as such, at least not as far as the contemporary notion of Gothic horror is concerned. It is important to mention, en passant, that the intermingling of Gothic horror and fairy tale is much more deliberate and intentional in the modern era, where examples such as Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1995)—as modernized re-tellings of classic fairy tales—expose the uses of horror in the narrative setup of the fairy tale as part of a clearly informed critique, as well as a successful creative experimentation. As far as classic fairy tales from the Golden Age are concerned, the re-inclusion of horror within the interpretative frame allows for engaging readings of the child reader, as well as the child subject, via the identification of culturally ambivalent notions such as violence. Echoing the narrative system of Gothic horror, fairy tales continuously fascinate readers by allowing them to identify “fearfully but pleasurably with vulnerable interlopers” (Armist 2009, p. 135). While the two rubrics did not necessarily develop in conjunction with each other, nor did they find a constructive balance as far as notions of both anxiety and storytelling are concerned, identifying the points of intersection between fairy tales and Gothic horror—where tropes from the two traditions intermingle and often merge—is useful in uncovering the psychological extents of fear as a culturally informed notion.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbruscato, Joseph. 2014. Introduction: The State of Modern Fairy Tales. In *The Gothic Fairy Tale in Young Adult Literature: Essays on Stories from Grimm to Gaiman*, ed. Joseph Abbruscato and Tanya Jones, 1–10. Jefferson: McFarland.
- Armist, Lucy. 2009. Gothic Fairy-Tale. In *The Handbook of the Gothic*, ed. Marie Mulvey-Roberts, vol. 135. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

- Becker, Susanne. 1999. *Gothic Forms of Feminine Fictions*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Bernheimer, Kate. 2010. Introduction. In *My Mother She Killed Me, My Father He Ate Me: Forty New Fairy Tales*, ed. Kate Bernheimer and Carmen Jimenez Smith, xii–xxv. New York: Penguin.
- Brown, Jennifer. 2012. *Cannibalism in Literature and Film*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Carter, Angela. 1995. *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*. London: Vintage.
- Coats, Karen. 2007. Between Horror, Humour, and Hope: Neil Gaiman and the Psychic Work of the Gothic. In *The Gothic in Children's Literature: Haunting the Borders*, ed. Anna Jackson, Roderick McGillis, and Karen Coats, 77–92. London: Routledge.
- Compura, Daniel P. 2016. Gothic Imaginings: Folkloric Roots. In *The Gothic Tradition in Supernatural: Essays on the Television Series*, ed. Melissa Edmundson, 75–90. Jefferson: McFarland.
- Daniel, Carolyn. 2006. *Voracious Children: Who Eats Whom in Children's Literature*. London: Routledge.
- Davidson, Hilda, Roderick Ellis, and Anna Chaudhri. 2003. Introduction. In *A Companion to the Fairy Tale*, ed. Hilda Roderick, Ellis Davidson, and Anna Chaudhri, 1–14. Cambridge: Brewer.
- Hunt, Peter. 2001. *Children's Literature*. Malden: Blackwell.
- Olson, Danel. 2011. Introduction. In *21st Century Gothic: Great Gothic Novels Since 2000*, ed. Danel Olson, xxii–xxxii. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.
- Propp, Valdimir. 1999. The Structure of Russian Fairy Tales. In *International Folkloristics: Classic Contributions by the Founders of Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes, 119–130. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Ray, Larry. 2011. *Violence and Society*. London: SAGE.
- Talairach-Vielmas, Laurence. 2007. *Moulding the Female Body in Victorian Fairy Tales and Sensation Novels*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Tatar, Maria. 1992. *Off with Their Heads!: Fairy Tales and the Culture of Childhood*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Warner, Marina. 1994. *From the Beast to the Blonde: Fairy Tales and Their Tellers*. London: Vintage.
- Zipes, Jack, ed. 2013. *The Golden Age of Folk and Fairy Tales: From the Brothers Grimm to Andrew Lang*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.
- . 2015. Introduction. In *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, ed. Jack Zipes, xv–xxxv. Oxford: Oxford University Press.



Turning Dark Pages and Transacting with the Inner Self: Adolescents' Perspectives of Reading Horror Texts

Phil Fitzsimmons

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC EYE: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SITES AND SIGHTS

This chapter unpacks a sub-set of findings arising out of a larger series of nested “ethnographic case-studies,” which focused on what adolescent students read both inside and outside of school (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier 2013, p. 3). For those not familiar with the ethnographic approach, it entails the study of a group or cultural collective as “it is” in a natural setting (MacKenzie 1994, p. 774). As Uwe Flick states, it “endeavors to catch a holistic perspective as well as capture the depth of understanding of respondents” (2014, p. 229). In this particular instance, I explored the relationship between the intent and meaning that underpinned adolescent reading behaviors. While the unexpected is always expected in this form of research, what emerged from this data set went beyond this research connection and the assertion that the reading of horror “restores order, if only temporarily” (Wisker 2005, p. 2). As will be discussed in ensuing sections, for the respondents in this study, the reading of horror enabled the pathway to what can only be described as psychical stasis.

Using the ethnographic data gathering tools of “in-situ observation” and “semi-structured interviews” in schools and homes in California, New Zealand, and Australia, it was found that small cohorts of adolescents, those “aged ten to twenty-five years,” were deeply engaged with horror narratives (Yin 2009, p. 11;

P. Fitzsimmons (✉)
Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, NSW, Australia

Charmaz 2014, p. 249; Fass 2016, p. 24). While deeply engrossed with horror across all genres, they read actual hard copy horror texts at every opportunity, and, as reported by the youngest student in this project, “Horror is much better in real books. You’re touching the page and touching the feelings of horror, and evil. If you read from real pages you have to look back, you notice and bits and pieces, and can see the reasons behind those feelings” (Student 10, aged 11 years).

This was the first young person with whom I spoke, and I began to wonder if her seemingly deep mindfulness, emotional understanding, and apparent visceral connectivity with reading horror were a theme running through the thinking and action of all the students who were reading horror narratives. In this paradigm and methodological approach, one embarks on an iterative, recursive, and reflective questioning process, which continually interrogates the interview and observation data at all stages by asking:

- Are there core elements or themes common to all respondents?
- Is there a core theme that drives or acts as a springboard of meaning making for the common themes?
- What does the embedded language in the interviews and the interactions in the observation data reveal about the thought processes and meaning making of the respondents?
- How do answers to the previous questions have “a goodness of fit” with the research in the associated field?

In an age of rapid technological advancement, while it appears that adolescents are often “engaged with digital texts at a deeply emotional level,” we still know very little about how “screen agers” actually read or what they read as they move among and between the various texts they encounter every day (Fitzsimmons and Kilgour 2017, p. 79; Rushkoff 1997, p. 13). From an educational perspective, given the spectrum of texts available to young people, it’s important to know how they read the different text forms they encounter and with what they are engaged so that classrooms remain “productive and relevant” (Ng and Bartlett 2017, p. 8). From a broader perspective, in a world of ever-increasing multimodality, little is known about how reading fits with adolescents’ “social imaginary” or “the ways they imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations” (Taylor 2004, p. 23).

FRAMING THE ETHNOGRAPHIC EYESIGHT: THE “GOODNESS OF FIT” WITH HORROR AND RELATED RESEARCH

It goes without saying that the overwhelming majority of parents simply want to keep their children safe. However, in the realm of children’s literature, this has been a perennial issue as parents and, to a certain extent, publishers balk at allowing children access to any text that appears to “transgresses the boundaries

and norms of childhood innocence” (Rose 1993, p. 118). This is especially the case during this time of global populist swings toward right-wing conservatism, in which children’s literature has often been held captive by publishers creating bookstore collections that imply a “Stepford-like” view of childhood (Fitzsimmons 2017). Children’s texts embedded in this web of cultural capital often represent “a manipulative nostalgia: a reconstruction of memory divorced from any reality; a strategy of using the past to deal with the present; connected with a desire that is irretrievably lost” (Scutter 1999, p. 108). Nikolajeva (2016) is also critical of both publishers and, to a certain extent, academics, believing both are often simply “orientated towards issues” (p. 5). Given her statements, it is interesting that, in her latest book, which includes the framing language of *A New Aesthetic* in the title, horror is not mentioned. The concept and purpose of monsters is given some voice in this text, but their conjoint role with horror of psychically “restoring order, if only temporarily” is ignored (Wisker 2005, p. 2).

Having said all this, it is also recognized that the monstrous and horror have long been elements in children’s literature, and, despite parental misgivings and publishers marketing concerns becoming very public spats about the appropriateness of certain children’s texts, there appears to be an overall shift in the acceptance of horror and gothic forms in children’s literature. This may be due to several reasons, including the hybridization of horror with fantasy and a range of other text forms; growing familiarization and the Disneyfication of monsters, such as Dracula; and the “dual access” by adults and children to films containing horror aspects, such as *Coraline*, *Hunger Games*, and the *Harry Potter* series. While obviously not an all-encompassing list, the previous texts are indicative of the hybridity that now exists in relation to horror (Wall 2006, p. 337).

However, there are also clear examples of children’s literature that cannot be classified as “dual access” and that plainly represent alterity. Although not without parental misgivings, the writings of Maurice Sendak, Matt Ottley, and Neil Gaiman are cases in point and clearly contravene the pervasive romantic myth of childhood innocence. In regard to the notion of innocence, Stockton succinctly states the current academic viewpoint when she writes: “The child is precisely who we are not and, in fact, never were. It is the act of adults looking back” (2009, p. 5). From these points of view, several questions need to be asked. Firstly, when does adolescence take over from childhood? Given that horror “is everywhere” and in every text type and media form in which children and adolescents are immersed on a daily basis, it seems logical that it should be a facet of children’s development that should be accepted openly and honestly (Wisker 2005, p. 4). While it is clear from the relatively little research that horror texts are part of everyone’s literary or viewing taste, there is the suggestion that horror narratives as deeply “troubling stories” are texts “that touch the core of what it means to be human” (Nieme and Ellis 2001, p. 10). Given the often emotional and social turbulence of the adolescent years “Horror films and adolescents are a medium and age group that that seem made for each other” (Derdeyn and Strayhorn 1992, p. 165).

While little evidence regarding engagement with horror exists within the actual field of horror research, research in other fields suggests that, indeed, this might be the case. As counterintuitive as it might seem at first, research arising out of the spirituality field suggests that children and adolescents “have a form of awareness, different from and transcending everyday awareness” (Hay and Nye 2006, p. 22). This hyper-awareness is an emotional and sensory intersection, as children and adolescents engage intentionally and deeply with all aspects of their environment. Campbell asserts that a key aspect of this engagement process is reading, which “encourages a shared understanding of the human experience” (1991, p. 4). From the perspectives of avid young readers, this is also the case with engagement with hard copy text. Focusing on generic reading habits only, Fitzsimmons and Lanphar found that even the youngest of readers often entered “an internal imaginative space that was sensorially realistic” and somewhat an altered state (2013, p. 52).

While the paucity of research into how reading actually works precludes digging deeper into this aspect of socio-emotional cognition, suffice it to say that Feeney and Moravcik’s premise that reading “gives young children a window on the world outside themselves” is a distinct possibility (2005, p. 28). Perhaps this concept of a window is much more than metacognition applied to reading strategies, as suggested by Scott Paris and Allison Paris, and more in line with Claire Painter, John Martin, and Len Unsworth’s comment that readers possibly employ “synergistic construction of meaning from the distinctive resources of image and language” (2013, p. 82).

INSIDE THE ETHNOGRAPHIC I: THEMES OF ENGAGEMENT WITH HORROR

Before unpacking the emergent themes arising out of the data supplied by these adolescents, several aspects need to be clarified. First, while these students engaged with horror in all its modalities, the following aspects deal with their reading of hard copy narratives and graphic novels. From their interview responses, in which they often used horror as a generic term, the phrase, “horror text,” will be used unless delineation is required. Second, the following emergent themes arose out of multiple “member checking” interviews and jointly constructed categories. In reality, these were deeply entwined and interconnected and have been teased out so that specific instances of “real life and connected learning experiences” can be understood (Jackson 2015, p. 35). The third point relates to when and why these students became engrossed with horror. While not specifically a focus of this project, this question did surface. These students were allowed, within reason, the habitus of freedom to read whatever they chose. Thus, as soon as they had the reading skills, they became attracted to horror. Books such as R.L. Stine’s *Goosebumps* series and writers such as Neil Gaiman and Alvin Schwartz were often mentioned. The key initial attractions to horror texts

were the difference between the texts often recommended to them by parents and the books seen on library shelves. In the words of one respondent, "These were so different. The stories seemed scary, and the illustrations were just so different. So much better" (Student 10, aged 11 years). While students tended to read widely, horror was "just so much better, more fascinating. It scared you but made you think" (Student 13, aged 12 years).

Further digging into the language responses of these adolescents, it became clear that horror texts, particularly hard copy texts that this group was reading, had become crystallized into a distinctive and deep "language-thought interface" (Wolff and Malt 2010, p. 3). However, for these adolescents, the reflexive principles, which formed their engagement with horror, went beyond the simple enjoyment of reading and thinking about text, as both aspects were components of their total frame of being. The following themes represent the reflexive means through which these young people gained a sense of agency that allowed them "to make decisions and take action toward their own life and well-being" (McLeod 2012, p. 34). In essence, reading horror was a journey within, with their thinking paralleling the themes and journey of the "monstrous other" in each text they read. The only difference was that they could find their way out of the diegetic labyrinth horror fiction represents.

Engagement with Horror as Reflexive Transaction

For the students in this study, engagement with horror would appear to be centered around a reflexive double helix of "fear as enjoyment" and "seeing versions of self." "It's like I fall into these books straight away. I turn the page and I'm there. Sometimes in fear, ... and it's like I'm [schizophrenic]. Like the schizophrenics in the books. But I'm the reader, ... but I'm looking at me. I am also looking at me being, well kind of scared. It's more subtle than the movies, but it stays with you longer" (Student 1, aged 17 years).

In what seems to be a naturally arising immersive process, the students reported much the same as is found in the previous quote, that their engagement engendered a reflexive process in which they become almost fully immersed in the text as an omniscient observer. This process appears to be a very visceral and highly sensory experience. Soon after opening the pages of these texts, these readers become so emotionally focused that they stated, it was a like a "blue ray in their head" (Student 6, aged 12 years). With time and their immediate surroundings appearing to be nonexistent, and through a process of visualization in their mind's eye, they began to see minute details that were summarized rather than fully explained in print and illustrations. "I re-read the Dracula and Ghost Rider graphic novels recently. While they obviously show you stuff, you, ... they force you into them as well. It's like reading between the lines. It's like, I'm walking around as well. I can really imagine more" (Student 9, aged 15 years).

While there was an overall enjoyment of horror in all genres, it would appear that, for these students, horror in hard copy text was not as “in your face as the movies” (Student 7, aged 15 years). One student described it as “smooth horror,” as reading and becoming immersed in the text allowed them to gradually feel their way into the narrative without the intensity, “anticipated, and still unexpected shudder” that other mediums rely on (Student 9, aged 15 years; Student 12, aged 17 years). Although the shudder effect was still a component with certain texts, the themes, imagined sights, and explained essences of hard copy horror texts appear to be much more imaginatively nuanced for these readers, in that “they linger. Like, I can’t sleep unless my wardrobe doors are closed. I know it’s stupid, and I’m older, but the stuff you read stays in your head. And kind of, ... spreads out. It’s not so much horror, as, ... constantly scared of simple stuff, ... at times” (Student 15, aged 15 years).

It would appear that horror texts for this cohort provided a creative third space mindset: a private space to conceive of who they were at the time of reading, how they could engender changes, or how they could emerge from issues they believed were threatening their sense of being.

The other day in class we played the stepping forward game, and at one point we were asked, “have you ever felt you couldn’t go on for another day?” And you know a big chunk of the kids stepped forward. I’ve felt like that but when I read horror, or even read other stuff, I can just stop and think about how the mayhem I am reading is like what I am going through. It helps put the brakes on, even if only for a little while. (Student 4, aged 14 years)

As stated, in tandem with the visualization experience, there was a parallel reflective awareness that enabled them to compare and contrast what they were reading with their particular personal and social context. For this group, horror texts in all their forms were not something to read in a single linear fashion but were re-read circuitously and at times recursively. “I can read the same book over and over and see different things each time. That’s why I love it, and not horror movies so much. With books and graphic novels, you can back, stop, and move forward again” (Student 3 aged 15 years). In the respondents’ opinions, this not only allowed them to savor the text but also to read texts as foils for critical reflection and evaluation. “Horror books, and movies are so full of opposite things, that connect but you have to see that it’s about the things teenagers think about” (Student 2 aged 11 years). This student’s response, by and large, succinctly summarized the natural resonance this group had with horror texts in that they found embedded instances or tropes dealing with identity formation. Although dealing with unstable characters and situations, these texts provided a stable platform to begin to crystallize their sense of being with self and being with others. As one student reported, “I get to touch and feel what I feel, and the way I see things. Yes, there are monsters in these pages, and stuff about evil, but it’s not even what you think it is. Its ... about you. But when I talk to others who read this stuff, it’s about all of us” (Student 16, aged 18 years).

Engagement with Horror as Reflexive Transgression

This theme of reflective transgression, an understanding common to all this set of respondents, reveals their engagement with horror as a means of seeking to understand their concept of self but also appreciating and evaluating where this sense of being had a “goodness of fit” within the boundaries of their social imaginary. Horror texts provide a multilayered platform that enables transference reflexivity, or a to-and-fro of thinking, whereby these students engaged with existential questions such as who am I and where do I fit?

As indicated by the response of Student 2 in the previous section, overall, this group had realized that early adolescence was a time of sorting out the meaning of late adolescence and adulthood, while still remaining childlike. Horror texts were one of the key “places of mind” in which they could “play around and see how growing up feels. It’s one of the only places that I get to choose what I get to think. Where I get to push out. I shift, ... I don’t know. There’s no one trying to get in my head. I let the text do that” (Student 8, aged 13 years). In a site of instability, this group began to find some form of stasis. It, perhaps, goes without saying that reflection was a key mindset that facilitated this and that comparing their shifting emotional states with the characters and settings in horror texts provided the means by which they compared “what we see and feel every day. Horror and monsters in the things I read often match real life in lots of ways, but then something makes you go, ‘oh wow,’ what does that really mean” (Student C, aged 16 years). Most agreed that the “something that made them go wow” was often seen to be “deliberately put into the book. But it’s you that have to make it fit, the words, pictures and the other stuff. It’s ... like metaphors” (Student 5, aged 17). It is this reading between the lines and making connections with the monstrous metaphoric that allowed a projection of how they see the physical, psychological, and social-emotional boundaries in these texts applied to their lives. Or, perhaps more importantly, they enjoyed the stepping over of taboos and boundaries deemed inappropriate by the adults and, at times, peers in their world. The time they spent reading was a form of internal hiatus, in which they could see and, to a large degree, cognitively and emotionally explore what boundary aspects of living they would be willing to step over, ignore, or consider. “Reading Marcello Baez’s graphic novels really push limits and make me think at least, what would I do. It’s like each gutter between the panels makes me think, yeah I would do that, or wait ... would I?” (Student 5, aged 17).

For these respondents, horror texts provided clear examples of a spectrum of horror instances that became even more focused as they slipped into suspension of belief. While these adolescents enjoyed the “jolt you get with being frightened, and the unexpected scare,” understanding or exploring these transgressive instances was done at the safe distance of “turning the page” (Student 11, aged 13 years). “I want to see death, mayhem and terror. But I can choose when to look or turn over if I don’t want to look” (Student 7, aged 16 years). Using the reading of horror to hold the world in hiatus or in tension appears

to provide the means through which boundaries of self and boundaries of social acceptance could be explored. These instances were by no means psychologically set. Rather, these personal boundary markers were something that could be reflected on and, as such, were often very ephemeral. With horror providing the means through which new meanings could be made and re-made with every reading and re-reading of a text, they allowed the dissonance these students often felt to be emotionally explored.

Engagement with Horror as Reflective Transformation

It also seems that transacting with horror was a means by which they sought to come to grips with existential aspects, such as empathy and hope, and their emotional reactions to these as they moved into a more developed understanding of self. "I love reading and writing about the dark stuff. The dark side is so much more fun. But, you know, it really tells you about hope. It's the only place I can find out by myself and have hope" (Student 11, ages 12 years).

This facet of reflective interaction with horror was also a component of recognition by students who were undergoing significant life transitions. As one younger adolescent stated:

Reading and writing about horror, It makes you think of living your life every second, in a positive way. Horror in the movies and in books, makes you think about living between life and death. They make you think of your past, and the choices you make. Being in middle school being stuck between childhood and adolescence, ... it can be horror. (Student 14, aged 12 years)

While not the only means of transitioning self and shifting through the concept of boundaries, as mentioned in the previous theme, reading and engaging with horror was an internalizing process that simultaneously provided reflective mechanisms in determining the "goodness of fit" between their world view and that of their immediate surroundings. As clearly indicated, reading horror was far from an engagement with depressive elements, but rather a means of generating a positive sense of wellbeing. While Derdeyn and Strayhorn believe horror films and adolescents "are a medium and age group that that seem made for each other" because of the dark mood swings that commonly characterize this developmental stage, the interview data arising out of this investigation reveals that the opposite is the case (1992, p. 165).

Engagement with Horror as Reflexive Transtextuality

A key aspect of reading horror for this group was the seemingly pure escapism that these texts brought to them. However, this escapism was much more than reading to disengage from the world around them, but rather to engage with their sense of reality by suspending it. As indicated in previous sections, such was the high-level engagement these readers brought to horror texts, that they

read with what can only be described as a heightened sense of noticing. In other words, not only do they engage as almost virtual participants when reading in which the horror texts “were like video in my head,” but they also appear to hone in on specific word and grammar usage (Student 11, aged 12 years). While for three cohorts it was their teacher’s questioning and focus on specific language use in classroom literature studies that facilitated what was in one classroom called “a sense of craft,” for the most part, these readers of horror had developed a self-formed intuitive sense of focusing on language use (Student 17, aged 12 years). This was a key component of reading this genre, in that they enjoyed reading and re-reading their favorite horror author and that they used text at the single lexical item level, as well as grammatical level, to create not only meaning but also resonance.

I just re-read Neil Gaiman’s *Smoke and Mirrors*. That guy uses so few words, but the ones he uses, and the simple way he puts them together just says so much, ... with so few. The writing is just, ... so crisp that the moment you start you’re there. Stephen King can do it for you too, but for me there are times when he stops when the sentences should just roll on. (Student 10, aged 16 years)

For the majority of these respondents, sensing and noticing the fine details of language use when reading horror texts also applied to the connections they made to other texts. These “transtextual or intertextual” interfaces were a clear reflective source and allowed for a swirl of deep-seated subjective meaning-making connectivity (Allen 2000, p. 98).

Horror books, Manga, comics and graphic novels, ... all of them have horror of some sort. Like death, dying, mayhem. The same stuff is in there, and even more than the books we study in class. You have to look harder. There’s more than one way to look at the story, and its different each time I read them. No that’s wrong, it’s not different just more involved. (Student 20, aged 16 years)

As an aside, while these students indicate that they were making intertextual connections, for one cohort of upper high school students, reading graphic novels in general and horror graphic novels in particular was banned in their school. As one student stated:

I’m seeing the same stuff like in Huxley’s books. That guy was thinking like me, but I can’t use what I’m reading now in class. I showed my teacher but all she said was I shouldn’t be reading comics. Even with Shakespeare, I read my brother’s *Sin City*, graphic novel and I could see the same themes in that. Horror is in us all. (Student 21, aged 17 years)

While reading horror intertextually allowed a personal consolidation and affirmation of students’ concepts of self, this aspect also provided a springboard through which they were able to “read like writers and write like readers” (Smith 1983, p. 560). While the respondents were not able to fully differenti-

ate the visualization processes described in previous sections from the transtextual focus outlined here, they are related in that “knowing how the words are strung together lets you understand how narrative works. It helps you get a deeper understanding of things. That’s always good. Reading horror just makes you let stuff sink into your brain even faster” (Student 8 aged 13 years). This process, in turn, enabled their own writing.

I appreciate the way words are placed when I read and try and keep this in the back of my head when I write. Horror has to be so cutthroat, sorry, didn’t mean that pun. You have to take care of what’s on the page. Like, Neil Gaiman just uses so few words but they good ones. When I write, I really have to think about what’s the best word. The one that says a lot without fluff. (Student 31, aged 16 years)

To conclude this section, a caveat needs to be clearly stated, in that, for the majority of Australian students, the writing of narrative was not a focused area of study or application. However, for many of the students, writing personal reflections and personal narratives allowed for the migration of both reflecting on their writing and migrating what they had read into their own texts. It should also be noted that the students in this study did not copy word for word but transliterated what they had read using their own vocabulary and grammatical construction. “Horror is like when you have information, like when sadness hits, it builds up. You feel like you’re the only that knows about it and you need someone else to know. You have to choose the best words to say this” (Student 4, aged 14 years).

CONCLUSION: THE NOT SO INSIDIOUS IS OF HORROR

For at least 300 years, the concept of horror in children’s literature has been conjoined with philosophy, theology, and religion in a triple helix of debate over whether children should be protected from all things dark. Perhaps stemming from the theological position of original sin, adolescents in particular were seen to be unable to deal with the notion of the horrific and so had to be protected from this force or they would become the minions of the forces that spawned dark narratives. And so until relatively recently, books written for children and adolescents had a consistent ideological underpinning of the heroic quest and the romantic notion of innocence. However, there have been rapid shifts in the content of written texts produced for these age groups that seem to have frightened parents and adult commentators more than the younger consumers. This small-scale study indicates that, with the shift in focus of new textual forms and content, adolescents in particular have the ability to discern quite clearly and easily what Carroll has termed “structured absences,” or the “implicit ellipsis” that occurs naturally in narrative (Carroll 1998, p. 12; Genette 1983, p. 106). There are now ever-increasing new “absences” and markers of horror, which lead the young reader to embrace humanity as a place of reflective retreat: to be explored and not doubted or done away with.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, Graham. 2000. *Intertextuality*. New York: Routledge.
- Campbell, Joseph. 1991. *Primitive Mythology: The Masks of God*. New York: Akana.
- Carroll, Noël. 1998. *Interpreting the Moving Image*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Charmaz, Kathy. 2014. *Constructing Grounded Theory*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE.
- Derdeyn, Andre, and Joseph Strayhorn. 1992. Resolved: Horror Films Are Good for Children. *Journal of American Academy Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 31: 165–169.
- Fass, Paula. 2016. *The End of American Childhood: A History of Parenting from Life on the Frontier to the Managed Child*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Feeney, Stephanie, and Eva Moravcik. 2005. Children's Literature: A Window to Understanding Others. *Young Children* 60 (5): 20–28.
- Fitzsimmons, Phil. 2017. Dick and Jane and Vampires. In *Growing Up with the Undead*, ed. Simon Bacon. Birmingham: Universitas.
- Fitzsimmons, Phil, and Peter Kilgour. 2017. Generation of Authentic Learning and Learners: The Conditions of Learning Underpinning Blended Learning and Online Forums. In *Handbook of Research on Humanizing the Distance Learning Experience*, ed. Maria Northcote and Kevin Gosselin, 78–93. Hershey: IGI Global.
- Fitzsimmons, Phil, and Edie Lanphar. 2013. Out of the Mouth of Babes, but the Mind of the Mature: Avid Adolescent Writers Talk About the Process. In *Spectrums and Spaces of Writing*, ed. Phil Fitzsimmons, Zoe Charalambous, and Susan Weisner, 47–54. Oxford: Interdisciplinary Press.
- Flick, Uwe. 2014. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Genette, Gérard. 1983. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Translated by Jane E. Lewin. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Hamilton, Lorna, and Connie Corbett-Whittier. 2013. *Using Case Study in Education Research*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Hay, David, and Rebecca Nye. 2006. *The Spirit of the Child*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Jackson, Glenda. 2015. Reflections on Australian Home Education Research. In *International Perspectives on Home Education*, ed. Paula Rothermel, 30–43. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mackenzie, Anne. 1994. Evaluating Ethnography: Considerations for Analysis. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 19: 774–781.
- McLeod, James. 2012. Vulnerability and the Neo-Liberal Youth Citizen: A View from Australia. *Comparative Education* 48 (1): 95–112.
- Ng, Clarence, and Brendan Bartlett. 2017. *Improving Reading and Reading in the 21st Century: International Research and Innovation*. Singapore: Springer.
- Nieme, Loren, and Elizabeth Ellis. 2001. *Inviting the Wolf In: Thinking About Difficult Stories*. Little Rock, AK: August House.
- Nikolajeva, Maria. 2016. *Children's Literature Comes of Age: Towards a New Aesthetic*. New York: Routledge.
- Painter, Claire, John Martin, and Len Unsworth. 2013. *Reading Visual Narratives: Image Analysis of Children's Picture Books*. Bristol, CT: Equinox.
- Rose, Jacqueline. 1993. *The Case of Peter Pan or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

- Rushkoff, Douglas. 1997. *Children of Chaos: Surviving the End of the World as We Know It*. London: Flamingo.
- Scutter, Heather. 1999. *Displaced Fictions: Contemporary Australian Books for Teenagers and Young Adults*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Smith, Frank. 1983. Reading Like a Writer. *Language Arts* 60 (5): 558–567.
- Stockton, Kathryn Bond. 2009. *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Taylor, Charles. 2004. *Modern Social Imaginaries*. London: Duke University Press.
- Wall, Barbara. 2006. Problems of Audience. In *Children's Literature: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. Peter Hunt, 239–252. New York: Routledge.
- Wisker, Gina. 2005. *Horror Fiction: An Introduction*. New York: Continuum.
- Wolff, Phillip, and Barbara Malt. 2010. *Words and Mind: How Words Capture the Human Experience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yin, Robert. 2009. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.



Horror and Damnation in Medieval Literature

Andrew J. Power

Literature and film very often reference the ancient in their efforts to generate a sense of horror, appealing to vague pre-Christian (and hence pagan) cultures to suggest violence and even sexual deviance that is horrific to a modern “civilized” mind.¹ And, indeed, the essence of the Gothic genre is that it appeals to the medieval as a source or origin of a horror (real or imagined) that haunts the present from the obscurity of a (“dark age”) past. But, in the medieval period, when biblical pageant was the dominant form of theatrical performance, it may initially seem less likely that we will find the sort of horrors that adorn the pre-Christian Greek and Roman tragic theaters. For example, recall the personal horrors endured by Oedipus that culminate in the self-mutilation of gauging out his own eyes (dramatized by Sophocles and Seneca), or the vicious kindermord and cannibalism of the house of Atreus as, for instance, in the bloody banquet of Seneca’s *Thyestes*, in which the title character unwittingly eats his own sons, or in the bloody specters of those same sons seen looming over the house by the captive Cassandra in Aeschylus’s *Agamemnon*. Beyond the merely lurid relation of violent and sexually taboo domestic drama, these ancient tales about ancient houses consumed by evil seem often to revel in the sort of audience provocation that is the essence of the more modern horror genre.² In the *Poetics*, Aristotle records that Aeschylus’s *Eumenides* (the next play to *Agamemnon* in Aeschylus’s *Oresteia*) was so horrifying that women in the audience miscarried.³ These may seem at first a far cry (or distant blood-curdling scream) from the drama of the Christian Bible. However, the biblical pageants and liturgical drama of the medieval age do provide horrors that bear comparison, and there are other sources of similarly chilling narratives in the literature of the period. Beyond the mere

A. J. Power (✉)
University of Sharjah, Sharjah, UAE

inclusion of horrific spectacle and lurid violence in the medieval literature surveyed in this chapter, I argue that the effects and experiences that distinguish horror literature are also elements essential to the success of the primary function of these texts, which is to provide (religious) moral instruction. The chapter urges that, without the experience and the thrill of horror, the recipient of this moral guidance cannot feel the full weight of the lesson.

CRUCIFIXION

The personal suffering of a protagonist is, of course, the subject of Passion plays in which Jesus suffers betrayal, torture, and execution in the grisliest of fashions.⁴ These are often multi-part plays (like the two parts of the N-Town “Passion Play”) that offer sustained assaults upon a silently suffering Jesus. Despite the content of the material, dark comedy often creeps into the plays’ action. For instance, in the Wakefield “Buffeting” play, a tension exists between Annas’s desire to have Jesus break his silence for trial and Caiphas’s desire to assault him himself: “Let me bett him!” (Bevington 1975b, line 219). Caiphas wonders if he is scared to speak, “dar thou not speke for ferde?” and the violence at either end of the play, as Torturers “taunt” and “beat him,” does offer much to fear in terms of tyranny and institutionalized violence (lines 168 and 410). In the Wakefield cycle, this acts only as prelude to the “Scourging” play, in which he is stripped, beaten again repeatedly, crowned with thorns, and prepared for crucifixion (a separate play again) (Bevington 1975k, lines 134, 138–151, 232). The horror of these tortures is often turned to comic action in these plays as the viciousness and/or incompetence (as in the York “Crucifixion”) of Christ’s persecutors run aground upon the silent suffering of the ultimately triumphant Christ. This has some of the savour of the B-Movie and may reflect the medieval equivalent in productions produced by guilds rather than professional troupes. But, of course, comedy has never been a stranger to horror, even before the recent popularity of the “horror comedy” subgenre.⁵ Thomas M. Sipos puts it quite nicely, writing that “comedy works with horror as it does with no other genre. ... Horror is bound to comedy by a human impulse to relieve fear with laughs. Fear is a fertile womb for laughter. Other genres use humor, but only horror carries an innate potential for humor. For better and worse. No other genre so risks unintentional laughs” (Sipos 2010, p. 25). In making slapstick buffoons of the horrifying soldiers (both spiritually and in terms of the violence they inflict), these plays tap in to the same connection between horror and comedy that made *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (Charles Barton 1948) a success (Blake and Bailey 2013, pp. 133–134).

SAINTS’ LIVES

Some Saints’ lives offer comparable examples of personal pain and of the horror of suffering under tyranny, torture, and eventual execution. Margaret of Antioch and Katherine of Alexandria were popular exempla of how to cope

with the horrors of this world. The tyrant, Olybrius, imprisoned Margaret for refusing his proposal of marriage. There, as the “Stanzaic Life of Margaret” tells us, God rewards her virtue by sending her a further cross with which to prove herself in the form of a “foule dragon” (Reames 2003b, line 227)⁶:

Holye mayde Margarete loked her beside.
There sche sawe a lothelye dragon in a corner glyde,
Brennynge as the blake fyre. His mouthe he gaped wyde.
That mayde wexed alle greene as the gresse in someres tyde.

Holy maid Margaret looked beside her,
There she saw a loathsome dragon glide by in the corner,
Burning as black as fire. He opened his mouth wide,
The maid turned as green as the grass in summer time,

The lowe fleye oute from his tonge as the fyre of brymeston.
That mayde felle to grounde tylle sche craked everye boone.
He toke her up in his mowthe; he swallowed her anoon;
Thorough vertue of her he braste, that harme hadde sche noon.

A flame flew out of his tongue like the fire of brimstone,
The maid fell to the ground, crying every prayer she knew
Then he took her up in his mouth and swallowed her;
Through her virtue he burst and no harm came to her. (Reames 2003b, lines 239–248, my translations)

When the dragon is thus vanquished, Margaret steps aside and he vanishes, but in his place another devil appears: “He hadde hondys, fete, and nayles on everye too” (Reames 2003b, line 257). While the poem explains that everything he touches must die, she somehow subdues him, cross in hand, with her wimple around his neck, bringing him to the ground and setting her foot upon him. As with the other of two martyred saints discussed below, the Saint’s image is extremely popular in medieval church artwork. She recognizes in his malice the intent to make her afraid, or “ferynge,” for she never in her life saw “so foule a thyng” and Belsabub admits their intent “to reve thee of thi memorye or make thee wode [i.e. mad] to bee” [to deprive her of her mind and/or her ability to recollect things or to make her mad] (Reames 2003b, lines 269, 270, 283). He explains to her that he takes special delight in tormenting mothers and children in childbirth and for this reason Margaret is a special patron of pregnancy and childbirth. In the dragon we have something of the savour of the monster movie, but, in the struggle over Margaret’s body, the story approaches the same sort of horror that is active in films like John Carpenter’s *Village of the Damned* (1960), Roman Polanski’s *Rosemary’s Baby* (1968), and, most impressively and persistently, the *Alien* series (1979, 1986, 1992, 1997).

Saint Katherine of Alexandria offers a similarly horrific tale of female torture and martyrdom. Under the tyrant Maxencius, she converted a multitude. John

Mirk's sermon (c. 1400) tells us that, in his frustration, Maxencius "com-mawnded to makon a grete horribul fyre and bren [i.e. burn] hem alle therine" [commanded that a great horrible bonfire be made and to burn them all in it] (Mirk 2003, lines 25–26). God intervenes, tames the fire, and spares the martyrs any pain so that they die with smiles on their faces. Mad with rage ("wode for tene"), he orders Katherine to be stripped and scourged, and she is then imprisoned for 30 days (Mirk 2003, line 29). However, this just excites further interest in her and the Emperor's wife, and 50 great scholars of the realm are ultimately also converted as a consequence. Again nearly mad ("nygh wode"), he contrives an ingenious contraption to be built on which to torture Katherine between two wheels, marvelously constructed, with two sharp hooks turning upward and two downward so that she would be sliced two ways each upward and downward ("betwene tweyon whelus that weron wondurly makuth, so that too turnyd upwarde and too dounwarde, ful of kene hokus, so that too schuldon have alle torasud [sliced] hyre upwarde and othor too donwarde") (Mirk 2003, lines 43–46). Once more, God intervenes through an angel, and the wheels are shattered, killing thousands of bystanders who have come to view the torture. The Saint's fame is preserved at Halloween in fireworks displays that include "Catherine Wheels" (that spin on a post spitting fire as they whirl).

Recent critical work has seen these female saints' lives in two slightly different ways: first, as almost salacious in the way the texts dwell on the body of the resistant virgin saint whose initial refusal of marital/sexual advances is met with forced bodily subjugation and, second, that instead the focus is on the tyranny of a variety of forces and on the virtue of resistance to tyranny, regardless of gender (Reames 2003a). In either reading, the horror remains. In one, it is in the perverse or taboo titillation of the blend of sex and violence, and in the other, it is in the horror of tyranny that must be resisted with virtue.⁷ It must be stressed also that there is a great variety in the number of these saints' lives.

HEROD AND KINDERMORD

If tyranny is the emphasis of these saints' lives, so too, the cycle plays offer us the sort of tyrant that Seneca would have reveled in, particularly in the kindermord, Herod. Indeed, the slaughter of the innocents is a rich source of horror in medieval drama, but there are two threads to the horrors of Herod plays. The first, and more obvious, is the horror of tyranny and the particular horror of mass murder (of children). The York "Flight into Egypt" treats Herod's horrific crimes rather philosophically, with Joseph asking, in prayer, "what ailes him for to spille / Smale yonge barnes that never did ille" and he cannot understand Herod's actions regardless of how mad or angry he is, "be he nevere so wode or wrothe" (Bevington 1975f, lines 67–68, 75). But, in spite of the dreadful nature of the crime, the Angel who comes to warn and guide Joseph makes sure that there is no real horror in the play by prefacing his warnings with reassurances, "Joseph, have thou no drede" (line 48). Contrarily, the twelfth-century Christmas play of the *Benediktbeuern* includes a section on the slaughter of the innocents

that has the direction, “*Let the soldiers go and slay the children*” and is followed by a lament of the mothers (line 542 stage direction). The second type of horror in the Herod story is perhaps more pronounced in this play. It is a curious type of horror, a clear expression of *schadenfreude*. That is, we want Herod to suffer, and we revel in the horror of his fate. When the mothers’ lament is concluded, the grisliness of the following stage direction speaks for itself: “*Afterwards let Herod be gnawed to pieces by worms, and leaving his throne a dead man let him be received by devils with much rejoicing among them*” (line 562). The N-Town “Death of Herod” does not involve worms or dragons, but the allegorical figure of Death provides a rather ghostly presence. He comes to take Herod at the pinnacle of his pride moments after he has declared himself “nevyr merier here befor” (Bevington 1975e, lines 168, 164). He celebrates the deaths of the murdered children in a banquet with his soldiers. But, as the minstrel is called upon to sing, a trumpet (of judgment) instead is sounded: “*Here, while they sound the trumpet, let Death kill Herod and the two soldiers suddenly, and let the devil receive them*” (line 232 stage direction). Gleefully, the devil who comes to take him adds a comical note to the horror of damnation by dwelling on the stench:

It were more bettyr amongys swin[e],	It would be better to live with pigs
That evyrmore stinkyn, therby to dwelle!	Forever, in their perpetual stench
For in oure logge is so gret peyn	For there is so much pain here in Hell
That non erthely tonge can telle (lines 237–240).	That no earthly tongue can express it.

Again, this mix of horror and dark humor, of revulsion and amusement, is a recognizable horror motif, and, as before, what is to be comical in these plays is exactly what is also the object of real fear.

DEVILS AND DAMNATION

Devils also populate the cycle plays at various other moments. For instance, in the opening scene of the N-Town “Passion Play I,” Lucifer (aka Satan) boasts of what he expects to achieve via Christ’s crucifixion: “To bring him to my dungeon, ther in fire to dwelle,” and, in the closing scenes of the “Passion Play II,” Lucifer returns “into the place in the most [h]orrible wise” (Bevington 1975i, part 1, line 6, part 2, line 465). The York and Wakefield cycles begin with “The Creation and Fall of the Angels” that also include Lucifer himself. It is easy at our safe distance (perhaps desensitized as much to matters of the spirit as to violence) to miss the horror potentially present in the dramatized figure of Lucifer or to fail to be “harrowed” by the vista of the underworld. Indeed, “The Harrowing of Hell” plays of the cycles certainly contribute to an impression of the devil as comic slapstick buffoon to Christ’s straight man. And, certainly at times, these pageant plays present a comic version of the devil defeated

in crucifixion by a triumphant Christ who harrows Hell and redeems the church fathers. But the celebratory humor of these plays is also inherently reliant on the intrinsic horror of the figure of the devil. God's triumph is a joyous laugh because he reduces and replaces the fear that the devil represents. And, there is a clear thrill beyond the simply grisly spectacle in the persistent appearances of Satan and his minions in these plays as there is in the representations of the devil in medieval church art that plays upon the same blend of comedy and fear. This is the same thrill in being frightened that draws readers and moviegoers to horror.

"The Last Judgement" of the Wakefield cycle offers a glimpse of what the real horror of Hell and its devils truly is. It includes the often-found comic routine of demons (accompanied in this play by Tutivillus—all evil—with his "roll ... of sinnes damonabill"), but it also begins with bad souls who are confronted with their own sin and the inevitability of damnation (Bevington 1975h, lines 224–225). These souls speak of their sorrow or "care" and of their fear and awe called "to the dome" (doom, or judgment) to "answere for [their] dede[s]" (lines 1, 6, 7, 2, 10). These sorrowful wretches or "carefull catifys" "wring [their] handys and wepe" for they know that the "feyndys" who will torture them eternally are something to truly "fere" (lines 17–18, 31). Later, the demons join Tutivillus in looking through his roll of sins and sinners:

Here is a bag full, lokys [look],
Of pride and of lust,

Of wraggers [wranglers] and of wears [wringers] a bag full of brefes [briefs],
Of carpars and criars [carpers], of michers [cheaters] and thefes,
Of lurdans [louts] and liars that no man [be]lefys,
Of flytars [quarrelers], and flyars, and renderars [sellers] of reffys [stolen goods].
(lines 141–146)

This comic listing of types of sinners is a parody of the confessional manuals common to the period. In the pageant plays, the curious combination of the slapstick buffoonery of sub- or in-human creatures and of the abject horror of the sufferings endured by sinners is not unlike the bizarre blend of cute and murderous that is at the heart of the success of Joe Dante's *Gremlins* (1984), Ivan Reitman's *Ghostbusters* (1984), Stephen Herek's *Critters* (1986), and Frank Oz's *Little Shop of Horrors* (1986).

CONFESSIONAL LITERATURE

The education of parishioners in medieval England in spiritual matters was formalized in response to the Fourth Lateral Council of 1215. It decreed that everyone must take confession once a year. As such priests were now required to examine their parishioners in all matters relating to sin and the spirit and must, therefore, be sufficiently educated to do so. Thereby began a process to

attempt to ensure a basic level of knowledge in the priesthood that culminated in the issue of a syllabus. It was prepared by Archbishop John Peckham of Canterbury at the Council of Lambeth in 1281. This document contained the Articles of Faith, the Ten Commandments, the Two Evangelical Precepts (or New Testament Commandments), the Seven Works of Mercy, the Seven Deadly Sins, the Seven Principal Virtues, and the Seven Sacraments (Jones 2007, pp. 406–422). For our purposes, two of the Articles of Faith will stand out: the first, explained in *A Lytell Geste How the Plowman Lernet his Pater Noster*, that Christ “suffred deth and harowed Hell,” provides the idea of a fearful experience, but the second, that Christ will sit in judgment, provides its counterpart and a personal terror (augmented by the first) that is assuredly the primary horror of the medieval Christian world (if not thereafter) (as cited in Jones 2007, p. 412). The Seven Deadly Sins must also be a fearful thought in their implications in this light. Visual representation of these things in English church wall paintings (as indeed across Europe) leaves little doubt about the horrifying (and as such edifying) potential in the specter of judgment. Hell mouths (like the one at Dauntton) also abound on the church walls of medieval times and are, at times, paired with or independently illustrate the potential for the sinner to be devoured by the sins in the form of devils. These sins, now vital to know and understand (in order to avoid), were also illustrated in great (and sometimes grisly) detail in collections of exemplary tales.

HORRIFYING EXAMPLES

Among the exemplary tales that one finds in the period, there are numerous ones that provide a chilling thrill as they also fulfill their exemplary didactic function of warning people by illustrating the punishments of judgment. For instance, a ghost story in Robert Mannyng de Brun’s *Handlyng Synne* describes the horrific specter of a dead monk who appears on a chapel bench. His tongue is on fire, and he’s sticking it out and drawing it back in and chewing and gnawing on it in great “peynës” (Mannyng 1903, line 3582). The sight is truly a horror to behold: “Pys munke stode and loked þarto, / And had þerof so mochë drede / Þat he wende hauë go to wede” (Mannyng 1903, lines 3584–3586). The back-biting monk to whom he appeared was so stricken with fear by the vision of this “foulë pyng” that he thinks he will go mad for dread (Mannyng 1903, line 3575). A similar terror grips the slothful sergeant, who is visited by “[b]lake ... foule stynkyng [devils], / Wyth glesyng eyen & mouth grennyng” (Mannyng 1903, lines 4459–4460). As they skewer him alive and drag him to Hell, he tells those whom he has returned to warn, that, at this point, he “wax nygh wode for dred” [he almost went mad for dread] (Mannyng 1903, line 4462). This, of course, is the greatest fear for the medieval period, not the apparition of a ghost, or the pain of physical torture, but the prospect of the death of the soul, of eternal damnation.

DAMNATION IS THE GREATEST FEAR

Mannyng tells the story of a knight struck down in battle in Rome during the time of Saint Gregory. At first, he seems to die on the battlefield.⁸ But then suddenly his “body quake[s]” (Mannyng 1903, line 1382). He arises to tell of a horrific vision:

y sagh a brygge of mochë wndyr,
A grymly watyr was þer vndyr,
Blak and depe & ful stynkyngge,
Dredeful noyse hyt made rynnynge.
Dunward yn-to helle hyt 3 ede;
whan y sagh hyt, y hadde grete drede.

I saw a bridge of much wonder
A grimly water was there under
Black and deep and foul stinking
Dreadful noise it made running
Downward into Hell it went
When I saw it I had great dread.
(Mannyng 1903, lines 1385–1390)

Beyond the bridge he sees heaven:

But yn þe watyr þat was hydus,
Stynkyng, blak, & merueylus,
y say moche folk falle þerynne,
Caytyuys charged ful of synne.
A myste out of þe watyr come,
And to sum housys hyt gan gone,
And to sum, come hyt noght,
Þat me merueyled yn my þoght.

But in the water, that was hideous,
Stinking, black, and marvellous
I saw many folk fall therein
Caitiffs charged full of sin
A mist out of the water came
And to some houses it began to go
And to some came it not
That I marvelled in my thought.
(Mannyng 1903, lines 1419–1426)

The terror here is that to fall means to fall into the hands of “þe mayster fende of alle” [the master of all fiends] (Mannyng 1903, line 1432). Of course, the exemplary nature of the text means that (lake of Hell and horror fog aside) there must be reason given for those taken to eternal torment. The knight duly recognizes two men: the vengeful Pers and the lecherous Steven. Pers is shown no mercy:

Yn þe watyr he suffred shame.
y sagh hym bere vpp-on hys krowne
Brynnyng eryl þat bare hym downe
In-to þe watyr, blak as kole.
Alas, þe paynes y sagh hym þole!

In the water he suffered shame
I saw him bear upon his head
Burning iron that bore him down
Into the water, black as coal
Alas, the pains I saw him suffer!
(Mannyng 1903, lines 1446–1450)

Steven, however, seems to be given a lifeline just at the moment of his greatest terror:

As he wulde passe þe brygge, betydde,
Hys fete begunne to slyde besyde,

As he wanted to pass the bridge, it
happened that
His feet began to slide aside

And, was yn poynt for to falle	And, he was at the point of falling
In-to þe watyr bytterer þan galle;	Into the water (more bitter than gall)
Pe fendës wende weyl hym to fonge,	The fiends fully believed they would catch him
But by þe bregge þan gan he honge.	But by the bridge he hung on
Pe fendys here crokys fasted yn hys	The fiends their hooks fastened into his knees, knees,
And al to-drowe & rente hys þees;	And pulled all together and rent his thighs
	(Mannying 1903, lines 1467–1474)

Just as his thighs rip and he is about to fall, fair men come and catch his hand to pull him up. The knight still does not know if he is saved or damned in the end, but he is sure that some alms deed has done his soul good.

ROMANCE AND THE UNDERWORLD

In romance, too, there is scope for horrifying tales. The tale of *Sir Owain* (early C14th, from late C12th Latin) offers a hellish narrative that recalls other literary traditions of the period.⁹ The knight, Owain of Northumberland, was so successful in battle that the only penance that he can think of for himself is to endure Saint “Patrikes Purgatorie,” a penitential practice sought out against the advice of his bishop (Foster 2004, line 141). The “hole... / That griseliche was of sight” leads “into Helle” and gives Owain a chance, although “in drede” and “aferd ful sore” of the store of “fendes” and “Lothly [loathsome] thinges” that “grenned on him her foule touten” [grinned at him with foul teeth], to experience Hell and to purge his sin (Foster 2004, lines 65–66, 143, 309, 315, 317, 320). This, unlike the journey of Sir Orfeo, is a truly horrific quest. In it there are an increasingly terrifying host of fiends, “dragouns,” and things that no one has ever seen before or known about, such as those that were “lotheliche and griseliche,” [loathsome and grisly] with 60 eyes and 60 hands (Foster 2004, lines 419, 683).¹⁰ There he sees devils torture sinners in a variety of horrific ways that include pits of molten “bras and coper and other metal,” fires that start out of the ground in “seven maner colours,” and a “whele” of fire (Foster 2004, lines 593–594, 631, 493).¹¹ His senses are assailed at every turn, as along with these “grisel sight[s]” he repeatedly hears sinner cry “as thai were wode” [as if they were mad], and his nostrils are constantly assailed by the stench, like the “stinkand water.../.../It stank fouler than ani hounde” (Foster 2004, lines 396, 540, 595, 692, 694).¹² Nor is he left unscathed on his journey. The various fiends that he encounters tear him with “hokes” and burn him with “wild fer,” they drown him in “a stinkand river” of fire, such that he thinks he will go mad and he faints, and, by the end, his “clothes wer al torent,” and his “bodi was al forbrent” (Foster 2004, lines 529–530, 553, 559–560, 675, 678). What Owain’s journey promises is that the sins we have committed will be punished by an eternity of the sort of tortures that to his sight cause

horror and sorrow. Even to the hearer's (or reader's) senses, these are fearful things to imagine, but there is also the promise that we will endure a share of this on our way to that blissful place that the end of the poem promises. Sir Owain, dubbed a "Seynt," must endure a considerable amount of horrific distress before he achieves the "joie of Paradis" at the end of the poem (Foster 2004, lines 1186, 1184).

Sir Orfeo (late C13th–early C14th) offers a perhaps more traditional sort of romance quest. In it, we read of how Queen Heurodis fell asleep under an orchard tree, only to arise with a start "in tears of wild despair" (Hunt 1909, line 78). She wrings her hands, beats her breast, and tears her hair and dress "for she was frantic in her pain" (Hunt 1909, line 82). When she finally ceases bloodying her fingernails on her own person, she explains that she must go voluntarily to "fairy land," or her "limbs shall fail," she will "be torn with tooth and nail," and she will wish she had journeyed of her own free will (Hunt 1909, lines 166, 169, 171). She departs and vanishes, and Sir Orfeo begins his long quest to win her back from the fairy King. Along the way, he encounters what seems like the land of the dead, as if it were "of the courts of Paradise" (Hunt 1909, line 375). A porter grants him entrance to a place where "Folk long thought dead were by a spell / Brought hither" in the same state as they were found, some "headless," missing various limbs, "strangled," "drowned," "burned," "in child-bed" (Hunt 1909, lines 388–389, 390, 395, 396, 397, 398). There he finds his wife, and they escape "from that woeful place" (Hunt 1909, line 474). The story would hardly seem blood curdling to a twenty-first-century cinema audience, though it does incorporate some of the sorts of details that, in other stories, add a certainly creepy atmosphere. It's eerie fairy stuff of the kind that inspired films like *Labyrinth* (1986), directed by Jim Henson and written by Terry Jones, or even more recently *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006), directed by Guillermo del Toro. Although there is a certain suspense in Orfeo's travels through these realms, the closest the romance tale comes to horror, in our modern conception, is in Heurodis's chilling screams and self-harm between her dream world encounter and her disappearance.¹³ While the journey or the quest is a traditional element in romance literature, these tales of horrific underworld encounter also reveal something of the instinctive fear of distant places. In Sir Owain's tale, life as a plundering crusader must be payed off by another journey. Both travels lead to horrors, the first committed by Owain in foreign lands, the second endured by Owain in otherworldly lands. But Sir Orfeo's quest engages with something altogether more frightening, an incursion into our realm by a diabolic other. Sir Owain's sins abroad may be explained by the fears expressed in Sir Orfeo's situation. This fear is also evident in the representation of others (particularly as tyrants) in the biblical pageant and the saints' life traditions.

TRAVEL LITERATURE AND THE HORROR OF OTHER RELIGIONS

There is a tension in the biblical pageant tradition between the seemingly good Jews of the Old Testament, persecuted especially by the Egypt of Pharaoh,¹⁴ and the Jews who are, according to the N-Town Banns, “ful redy ther shul be bent, / Crist to acuse with worde and thouth” (Bevington 1975a, lines 337–338). In the plays, we see Jews “crye fast for to kille; / The rythful man they aske to spille” (lines 382–383). This highlights something of the time, specificity of horror, or at least of practices for the inducement of fear. Pharaoh, too, in the Wakefield “Pharaoh” play, represents something of an anachronism. As Moses and his faithful (Jewish) followers look to escape, Pharaoh leads his train through the Red Sea praying to Mohammed: “Heyf up youre hertys unto Mahowne; / He will be nere us in oure nede” (Bevington 1975j, lines 412–413). Later, in the same pageant sequence, this anachronism is repeated when the Nuntius (or Messenger) to Herod in the Wakefield “Herod the Great” also begins a Slaughter of the Innocents play with a similar prayer: “Moste mighty Mahowne meng you with mirth [make you mirthful]!” (Bevington 1975g, line 1). By this stage in the cycle (once the good Jews in Moses’s company are forgotten), there is no need to draw a distinction between Jews and Muslims, for this Herod is “king—by grace of Mahowne—/ Of Jury” (lines 10–11). That is, it is the god Mohammed who is to be thanked that Herod is King of the Jews. Herod, himself, even swears by “Mahowne in heaven” (lines 127–128). The same conflation is made in and across the different cycles.¹⁵ And, after the innocents have been slaughtered in the N-Town, “Death of Herod,” he assures us that the great celebration they are having is thanks to “gracious Mahound” (Bevington 1975e, line 209). However, one of the soldiers at this court of Herod reveals something of how the association is thought of in these conflations, for he also revels in the “goodly sight” (of children on his spear) that was granted them “By Sathanas oure sire” (line 221). His successor, Herodes Rex (Antipas), announces himself in the “Passion Play II” later in the sequence: “I am Herowde, of Jewys king most reverent. / The lawys of Mahownde my powere shal fortefy” (Bevington 1975j, part 2, lines 5–6). Little distinction is made between religious others (or even Herods), be they Jews or Muslims, all of them are considered children of Satan, and all of them are horrifying in their cruelty. Geraldine Heng gives a very clear sense of the “monstrous,” “inhuman, animalistic,” “rabid,” “subhuman,” “uncanny,” “alien,” “black,” “infernal” otherness of other races and religions that are a terror to the “*homo europaeus*” in the most important travel literature of the period, using examples from such works as *Mandeville’s Travels* (1368), Matthew Paris’s *Chronica Majora* (1259), and the Hereford *Mappa Mundi* (c. 1300) (Heng 2007, pp. 247–249, 260–266). The representations of other races and religions in medieval literature surely signal the most common origin of horror or the underlying (sometimes unspoken) fear that is at the heart of cultural terror.

Most of the tales dealt with in this chapter belong also to another genre or, in many cases, simply are of another genre but contain elements that are fearful or horrifying to human sensibilities: the fear of the Other in travel literature or romance, the horror of sin and of evil in collections of exemplary tales, and the terror of damnation in moral and biblical drama. In a period when most writers were clerics (or were writing drama for religious occasions), it is no wonder that other religions are made fearsome or that the primary purpose of what is written is most often didactic. What is perhaps surprising, with this in mind, is how often these writers return to the thrill of horror or to that curious blend of horror and comedy that has been observed above. There, we may find a useful way of distinguishing between the culturally curious and the horrific (in travel and romance) and between the horrendous (in human terms) and horrifying (in literary terms). Thomas M. Sipos distinguishes between genres based on a simple question: “Does the fear survive the laughter?” (2010, p. 24). I would argue that, if these texts are to serve their didactic function, the fear must remain. Viewers, readers, and auditors of these tales must end with a terror of sin and the sinful and a fear of the devil and damnation. The *relief* of laughter in the representation of these things must remain just that, for evil cannot be laughed off if we are to learn from it.

NOTES

1. We might think of H.P. Lovecraft’s Cthulu (“The Call of Cthulu,” 1928) or of Universal Studios’ unearthly horror movies of the same title *The Mummy*, directed by Karl Freund (1923), Stephen Sommers (1999), and Alex Kurtzman (2017). Similarly, William Friedkin’s *The Exorcist* (1973) features an ancient evil disturbed by an archaeological dig. The trope is ubiquitous.
2. Noël Carroll usefully distinguishes between “natural horror” in literature and “art-horror” in literature and film in an essay that also considers the Gothic genre (Carroll 1987, pp. 51–59).
3. S.A. White’s essay on Aristotle makes the distinction between an effect Aristotle observes here (similar to that of “Hollywood horror-films”) and the finer sort of cathartic resolution of emotions in true tragedy (White 1992, p. 232).
4. In fact, the c. 1100 theologian, Honorius de Autun, makes this exact link in an essay on tragedy, “*De Tragœdiis*.” “[O]ur tragedian,” he writes of the celebrant, “represents to the Christian people in the theatre of the church, by his gestures, the struggle of Christ” (Auten 1975, p. 9).
5. This subgenre is perhaps best exemplified by the *Scary Movie* series, directed by Keenen Ivory Wayans (2000, 2001), David Zucker (2003, 2006), and Malcolm D. Lee (2013).
6. A number of further versions of this popular legend exist, not least by John Lydgate (*The Lyfe of Seynt Margarete*) and attest to the broad appeal of these stories, even in the vernacular. Lydgate’s text is for readers, while most works, as in this instance, are imagined by the writer as read aloud to a listening audience. The poem “dates to the second half of the thirteenth century,” though it is preserved in “fifteenth-century copy” (Reames 2003b, p. 112).

7. Reames suggests Elizabeth Robertson's essay, "The Corporeality of Female Sanctity in *The Life of Saint Margaret*" (1994), and Gayle Margherita's essay, "Body and Metaphor in the Middle English *Juliana*" (1994), in the first of these two categories and Lynn Staley Johnson's essay, "Chaucer's Tale of the Second Nun and the Strategies of Dissent" (1992), Mary-Ann Stouck's essay, "Saints and Rebels: Hagiography and Opposition to the King in Late Fourteenth-Century England" (1997), and Karen Winstead's book, *Virgin Martyrs: Legends of Sainthood in Late Medieval England* (1997), in the second.
8. It is not clear whether it is during the siege of the Lombards or one of the earlier sieges of the Goths. However, there is a feeling of divine judgment in the description of the battle: "arwys fro heuene shete / And smote men to þe dep down ryȝt; / And one of þe arwys wounded a knyȝt" (Mannying 1903, lines 1372–1374).
9. The text is also known as *Owayne, Miles* and simply as *St Patrick's Purgatory*.
10. Actually, these two creatures do seem distinctly like they have been imagined before, for they are reminiscent of Briareus, who had a hundred hands, and Argus, who had a hundred eyes.
11. Perhaps recalling St Catherine's torture or perhaps that of Ixion (wracked upon a wheel) in classical literature.
12. Proximity to madness is also a staple of the horror genre. Think, for instance, of Stephen King's *The Shining* (1977) or Dennis Lehane's *Shutter Island* (2003), both also successful films directed by Stanley Kubrick (1980) and Martin Scorsese (2010), respectively, or of films like Adrian Lyne's *Jacob's Ladder* (1990) and Mathieu Kassovitz's *Gothika* (2003).
13. This has something of the *savour* of Wes Craven's *Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984–2010) franchise.
14. The first tyrant of the cycles is Pharaoh (like the one in the Wakefield play by that name). He anticipates Herod the Great in many ways, but it is his desire to kill even children (specifically, all male children) that is most horrific: "We shal make midwifys to spill them / Where any Ebrew is borne, / And all menkinde to kill them; / So shall thay soyn be lorne" (Bevington 1975j, lines 73–76).
15. Similarly, in the N-Town sequence, the "*three Jews*" in "The Woman Taken in Adultery" lead the accusations against and trump up charges (to Jewish and Roman authorities) against Jesus (Bevington 1975l, line 41) and Annas of the *Passion Play I*, "of Jewys jewge" and his "Sarazyn...masangere" (Bevington 1975i, part 1, line 2 stage direction). Or, in the Wakefield cycle, one of the Roman soldiers, or Torturers in the "Scourging" play, swears "by the might of Mahowne" (Bevington 1975k, line 390) and "Mahowne, oure heven king" (line 408). In the York cycle, one (Roman) Soldier in "The Crucifixion of Christ" cries for silence, "for Mahounde!" (Bevington 1975d, line 129).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bevington, David, ed. 1975a. The Banns (N-Town). In *Medieval Drama*, 242–257. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- , ed. 1975b. Buffeting (Wakefield). In *Medieval Drama*, 536–552. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- , ed. 1975c. The Christmas Play (Benediktbeuern). In *Medieval Drama*, 178–201. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

- , ed. 1975d. The Crucifixion of Christ (Pinner and Painters, York). In *Medieval Drama*, 569–579. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- , ed. 1975e. Death of Herod (N-Town). In *Medieval Drama*, 454–459. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- , ed. 1975f. Flight into Egypt (Marshals/Grooms, York). In *Medieval Drama*, 429–436. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- , ed. 1975g. Herod the Great (Wakefield). In *Medieval Drama*, 437–453. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- , ed. 1975h. The Last Judgement (Wakefield). In *Medieval Drama*, 637–662. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- , ed. 1975i. Passion Play I & II (N-Town). In *Medieval Drama*, 477–535. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- , ed. 1975j. Pharaoh (Wakefield). In *Medieval Drama*, 322–336. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- , ed. 1975k. Scourging (Wakefield). In *Medieval Drama*, 553–568. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- , ed. 1975l. The Woman Taken in Adultery (N-Town). In *Medieval Drama*, 460–469. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Blake, Marc, and Sara Bailey. 2013. *Writing the Horror Movie*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Carroll, Noël. 1987. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46 (1): 51–59.
- Foster, Edward E., ed. 2004. Sir Owain. In *Three Purgatory Poems*. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications.
- Heng, Geraldine. 2007. Jews, Saracens, ‘Black Men’, Tartars: England in a World of Racial Difference. In *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture, c. 1350–c. 1500*, ed. Peter Brown, 247–269. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hunt, E.T.E., ed. 1909. *Sir Orfeo*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jones, E.A. 2007. Literature of Religious Instruction. In *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture, c. 1350–c. 1500*, ed. Peter Brown, 406–422. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Manning de Brunne, Robert. 1903. *Handlyng Synne*. Edited by Frederick J. Furnivall, Parts 1 & 2, Early English Text Society 119 & 123. London: Kegan Paul. Originally Published 1303.
- Mirk, John. 2003. Sermon on St. Katherine. In *Middle English Legends of Women Saints*, TEAMS Middle English Text Series, ed. Sherry L. Reames, 211–218. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications.
- Reames, Sherry L., ed. 2003a. Introduction. In *Middle English Legends of Women Saints*, TEAMS Middle English Texts Series, 1–13. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications.
- , ed. 2003b. Stanzaic Life of Margaret. In *Middle English Legends of Women Saints*, TEAMS Middle English Text Series, 115–127. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications.
- Sipos, Thomas M. 2010. *Horror Film Aesthetics: Creating the Visual Language of Fear*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- White, Stephen A. 1992. Aristotle’s Favourite Tragedies. In *Essays on Aristotle’s Poetics*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, 221–240. Princeton: Princeton University Press.



The Jacobean Theater of Horror

Tony Perrello

Commenting upon her role as the violated and suffering Lavinia in the 1985 BBC version of *Titus Andronicus* (1594), actress Anna Calder-Marshall observed that the Shakespearean drama's revenge-fueled cornucopia of dismemberment, rape, and ultimately cannibalism still stands as “very, very frightening” and is undeniably close kin to the modern-day “video nasty”—the cinema of horror (Bate 1995, p. 2). As Jonathan Bate explains, contemporary theatergoers “may still be disturbed by the play's representations ... but moviegoers will be very familiar with this kind of material” (p. 2). The playwrights of late Elizabethan and early Jacobean blood revenge drama labored diligently to exploit the shock value of creative bloodletting and nightmarish psychological and physical torture. Alongside Lavinia's horrific attack at the hands of barbarian princelings—a Philomela-like rape and *ad-hoc* amputation of her organs of communication, hands and tongue—these dramas feature, for example, from *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606), an avenger's requital for a murdered fiancée via tricking her murderer into kissing her poisoned skull and then nailing his tongue to the floor as he dies in agony while watching his wife cuckold him with his bastard son. They also feature, from *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614), a wax tableau of the Duchess's slaughtered family designed to drive her mad, a severed hand she must kiss in the dark, murder by means of a poisoned Bible, and lycanthropy. As the ghost of Hamlet's father laments in that most acclaimed drama of horrific blood revenge, suchlike visions are “horrible, horrible, most horrible!” and prompt in their audience “...each particular hair to stand on end / Like quills upon the fearful porpentine” (I.v.19–20)—an image recalling the etymological significance of the word *horror*, from the Latin *horrēre*, “to bristle.”

T. Perrello (✉)
California State University, Stanislaus, Turlock, CA, USA

Modern readers accustomed to the smooth, digestible prose of a Stephen King or a Dean Koontz may be forgiven if the language of Renaissance blood revenge tragedy is not immediately accessible and familiar. In contrast to the discursive aesthetics of contemporary horror fiction—favoring minimalism and oblique implications by comparison—these historical dramas feature versification and elaboration as a standard format. They abound in monologues and set speeches cast in elevated speech, gilded and densely layered with the rich, allusive language of image and metaphor. The Renaissance adherence to rhetorical traditions reaching back to Cicero and Seneca may strike modern readers as campy bombast. However, beyond the homage to its classical forbearers, revenge drama's poetry of violence serves uniquely to materialize the abstraction of language into the horror of action on stage.

In his study of “The Aesthetics of Mutilation in *Titus Andronicus*,” Albert Tricomi argues that artful imagery, metaphor, and paronomasia reify disturbing concepts and images so that language becomes spectacle, “conveying forcefully the Senecan and Ovidian horrors that [Shakespeare] has committed himself to portraying” (Tricomi 2004a, p. 226). Thus, the play's sixty or so references to “hands” become disembodied hands in a repulsive literalization of metaphor—a powerful, graphic effect not available to the fiction writer. However, through their incorporation of fear-inducing imagery and commonplaces associated with Gothic horror, a handful of American horror writers do produce tales of terror that approach the power of Renaissance theater as an agent of horror. These include H.P. Lovecraft's invocation of overwhelming dread emerging from his suspenseful allusion to eldritch books and histories in his Cthulhu mythos; Edgar Allan Poe's macabre imagery and his tropes of incest, suffocation, and nightmarish visions; and Ambrose Bierce's appropriation of Gothic conventions of the uncanny and horrific, amplified by his humor on the horrible, but tempered with a sense of nihilism. More recently, Cormac McCarthy's novels, filled with gore, violence, and ties to mythic horrors, include cannibalism (*The Road*), necrophilia (*Child of God*), and incest (*Outer Dark*), expressed in artful imagery and electric prose. The modern *Schauerroman*, or “shudder-novel,” stands in part on a foundation laid by the technical traditions of early modern revenge drama.

The inaugural revenge tragedy, the trendsetter, was Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (c. 1587), performed more often than any other sixteenth-century English stage play and developing a cult-like appeal. From its debut until the Puritans shuttered the theaters in 1642, tragedies featuring the horror of blood revenge were produced in rapid profusion, at first slavishly following the Kydian formula, then easing into plots driven by bloody one-upmanship, sequels, parody, and finally dark, brooding slaughterfests. Citing the venerable Fredson Bowers, Eileen Allman observes that the post-Elizabeth reign of James I, the “bloody heyday” of these plays, marked a shift “from the ‘highly moral’ Elizabethan plays, where violence was a ‘testing ground for the human spirit,’ to the sensational and gratuitous violence of the Jacobean, with its focus not on heroism but on villainy, horror, and love” (Allman 1999, p. 37). These early

modern tragedies of blood specialize in stark, raving madness, rhetorical excess, dismemberment, betrayal, complex scheming, occult intrusions into reality, sexual perversity, cynicism or outright nihilism, and of course, piles of corpses—a list that uncannily links the revenge tragedy genre to modern expressions of horror in cinema and fiction. And these plays, like modern horror films, were consistent crowd-pleasers.

The striking similarities between the early seventeenth century and the late twentieth in their mutual taste for horrifically transgressive dramatic arts may have roots in a number of resonant cultural shifts and consequent social unease. Twentieth-century Western culture weathered the teachings of Darwin, Freud, Nietzsche, Marx, and the postmodernists who followed, collectively knocking the pins out from under traditional social institutions and sources of meaning. Two world wars, genocides, Cold War fears of nuclear annihilation, and the aspirations, achievements, and failures of American empire left a population teetering on the fine edge between horror and hope—and with a high appetite for “slasher films,” rape-revenge films, and supernatural horror. The post-Tudor era likewise emerged out of fears over an uncertain future, perhaps partly characterized by an Elizabethan court rife with scheming, factionalism, and spies around every corner. In the world beyond the royal court, skepticism and epistemological uncertainty had been on the rise for decades. Andreas Vesalius and the anatomists publicly dissected corpses, producing graphic and often grotesque representations of corporeality along with troubling doubt over cherished but archaic beliefs about the workings of the human body. In 1543, Copernicus published his *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*, shattering the familiar Ptolemaic model for an earth-centered universe. Essayists like Michel de Montaigne hacked at the notion of mankind’s supremacy among animals. Machiavelli’s realpolitik irrevocably altered the conviction that rulers were anything more than individuals motivated by power politics, subject to human frailties of lust and greed, and successful only insofar as they served political expediency.

Cynicism and divisiveness deepened during the reign of King James, who gives his name to the Jacobean period of 1603–1625. An increased global sense of the world born of exploration, trade expansion, and travel brought often disquieting news and lurid stories from faraway places. Renaissance travelogues, such as Pliny’s *Natural History* or Mandeville’s *Travels*, disseminated tales of strange, weird, and frightening monsters to be found in exotic lands. Shakespeare’s *Othello* spins his reputation partly upon such tales as of “the cannibals that each other eat, / The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads / Do grow beneath their shoulders” (*Othello* I.iii.143–145). Locally, London itself was the site of constant flux in commerce and day-to-day life, experiencing a boom that saw its population grow from 60,000 in 1520 to 375,000 fifty years later, before the purging of the Great Fire (Greenblatt 1997, p. 3). Stephen Greenblatt has characterized the economic habits of a growing London population between 1567 and 1642 as “[c]onspicuous consumption,” and this demographic trend is perhaps the most salient feature of the early

modern as opposed to the medieval (p. 5). Such disorienting growth, change, and uneven prosperity bolstered consumer confidence while neglecting to allay anxieties about what might come next (an economic feeding frenzy akin to the Silicon Valley boom in the US of the 1990s after the previous decade's disappointments in the "trickle-down" promises of Reaganomics).

Jacobean Londoners, many of whom were merchants, investors, and social aspirants, visited the theater an estimated fifty million times between 1567 and 1642 (Greenblatt 1997, p. 3). The tragedies they watched were dark and dis-solute. Rowland Wymer argues that the flawed, tragic hero Essex—Elizabeth's one-time favorite-turned-traitor—became a seventeenth-century model for a type of Nietzschean protagonist in the drama of the period, a drama filled with imperious tyrants, dark sexuality, disease, and moral decay exemplified by the image of the fleshless skull—a *memento mori*, to remember that you will die (Wymer 2003, p. 548). Given the relative powerlessness of the commoner, stuck in a stultifying hierarchy and a universe increasingly depleted of moral purpose, the emergence of a hero who strikes out against those enshrined at the top of the hierarchy, lawfully or not, should come as no surprise. The theater was perhaps the only place in which such fantasy could be enacted. The Duke in *The Revenger's Tragedy* rules in spite of his crimes and is shielded from the avenger Vindice by layers of bureaucracy. Thus, the figure of the wronged man set against a system which denies him access to earthly justice demands he turn to private revenge. The avenger is a plain man finding a horror-filled path among courtly schemers to strike at the heart of a corrupt system, and Renaissance theatergoers eagerly consumed stories of heroes who lashed out at oppressive hierarchies with over-the-top cunning and unstoppable violence.

Perhaps *The Revenger's Tragedy* is the quintessential play in the genre. All that might be expected of a revenge play finds a place in this orphaned drama, arbitrarily attributed to Thomas Middleton. T.S. Eliot, the high priest of literary criticism in the early twentieth century, noted that "The cynicism, the loathing and disgust of humanity" were "expressed consummately" in this play full of "characters which seem merely to be spectres projected from the poet's inner world of nightmare, some horror beyond words ... its motive is truly the death motive, for it is the loathing and horror of life itself" (Eliot 1964, p. 129). In this quasi-allegorical drama, personified Lust pursues Chastity, whose brother, Vengeance, seeks retribution, while Ambition seeks to supplant Lust's claim to the throne. Medieval Morality Play commonplaces, such as *contemptus mundi*, *memento mori*, *danse macabre*, and *exemplum horrendum*, become strikingly modern: sensual pleasures are a trap; metaphorical poison becomes literal; the skull leers just beneath the skin; moral corruption leads to physical decay; courtiers greedily indulge self-destructive urges, while the world hurtles toward dissolution and destruction. The nihilism inherent in horror genres (such as zombie films, which tend to subvert precious narrative motifs like heroism, chivalry, and the inviolability of children) was attached to Renaissance tragedy in the wake of World War II. In 1950 Clifford Leech, for instance, commented, "Nor is there in any great tragedy the notion that

things will be put right in another world” (Leech 1950, p. 10). Flights of angels may sing Hamlet to his rest but not Vindice or most other raving avengers, like Hieronimo or Titus. The skull, emblematic of revenge tragedy, draws viewers’ eyes to its empty sockets. The avenger, robbed by death and embarking on a journey to confront death, stares into the void of the skull as well, prompting Nietzsche: “Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And when you look long into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you” (Nietzsche 2000, p. 279). The journey of the avenger is a journey into the self. Isolation intensifies self-reflexivity, and the dawning awareness that identity is a mere fiction that must be abandoned shapes his sad steps.

Notably like modern cinematic horror in hyper-awareness of its own formulaic structure, the metatheatricity of early modern blood revenge horror defines the genre as post-classical and situates it in discussions of modernity. Renaissance dramatists developed and frequently deployed as pure a metatheatrical contrivance as can be: the play-within-a-play. The opening of Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* plunges viewers into a *mise-en-abyme* of metatheatrical iteration. A dead man, Andrea, recounts his treacherous murder on the field of battle by the Portuguese prince, Balthazar (a scene that will be recounted from several different viewpoints in the course of the play). Seething with bitterness over his death and the loss of his lover, Bel-imperia, accompanied by Revenge, he emerges from the underworld through a dreamlike portal to the living world of the stage. From the point of view of the vengeful ghost, the audience watches a spectacle of deception and delusion—a show, a dream—exposing the illusory nature of earthly justice. Hieronimo, an official of the Spanish court, becomes increasingly maddened in his revenge quest for his murdered son. The horror and madness climaxes with Hieronimo’s play-within-the-play-within-the-play, *Soliman and Perseda*, in which characters speaking different languages according to a script stab one another to death under the guise of illusion. Hieronimo, the playlet’s author, renounces language by biting out his tongue, stabbing the Spanish Duke, and killing himself with a penknife. Though not all blood revenge drama formally features plays-within-the-play, in each, the revenger essentially stages his own self-authored script of vengeance, maintaining the double staging of the tragedy and horror of the original crime and the vengeance it provokes.

Kyd’s play, and therefore the entire enterprise of revenge drama indebted to it, shares with modern horror a persistent sense of self-reflexiveness. Spectatorship and eyes are central to the genres. Our manner of perception has consequences, and horror art can have the effect of cleansing human vision. Horror film is stubbornly “meta,” constantly referring to itself, to the genre, to its conventions, to other films in its canon, and to its status as a contrivance. Examples are legion: *Scary Movie* (2000) and its sequels parody horror conventions as they deploy them; *Scream* (1996) features articulate teens watching and deconstructing horror movies as they live through one, getting picked-off one after another by Ghostface; *Evil Dead II* (1987) reimagines and parodies

its predecessor *The Evil Dead* (1981), the hero, Ash, morphing into a goofy knock-off of himself in the earlier film. *Peeping Tom* (1960) is perhaps the ur-metafilm in the genre. A serial killer films women with a deadly camera equipped with a murderous spike and a mirror. The mirror captures not only the victim's terror at being murdered but also her horror at seeing herself in the mirror gazing at her own fear. *Peeping Tom* codes gazing—spectatorship—as an act of aggression, power, and voyeuristic pleasure. The psychodynamics of fear are involved in the act of looking. Horror is about eyes in the dark fearfully watching horrors on stage or screen, either through the lens of an I-camera following Michael Myers in *Halloween* or through the eyes of the dead Andrea watching his post-mortem revenge in *The Spanish Tragedy*.

As with the power of the eye to gaze upon victims of and in horror, the power of the digestive tract—lips, tongue, and gut—also features prominently in blood revenge horror. Rooted in Greek mythology (Cronos devouring his children; Tantalus making his own son into food for the gods; Procne vengefully serving Philomela's rapist Tereus a stew made from his own son), the cannibal feast motif figures prominently in Seneca's *Thyestes* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The latter served as an important sourcebook for Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, which actually appears onstage, used by the mutilated Lavinia—who has no hands to weave a tapestry—to help identify her rapists. The cannibal banquet trope goes hand in hand with other transgressions of the flesh, especially rape and incest. Thyestes's pollution can be compared to that of Philomela, Tamora, and Tereus because forbidden flesh has entered all of these bodies (Tamora and Thyestes through eating the flesh of their sons, an act of existential erasure and horror, Philomela through incestuous contact, Tereus through incest and rape). Cannibalism is typically emblematic of misgovernment, the fate of a sinful, unclean tyrant in antiquity. However, in most Renaissance revenge plays, women feed on the grisly fare rather than prepare it, as in the classical iterations of the myth. In Dekker and Middleton's *The Bloody Banquet*, the young queen's lover, Tymethes, has his limbs hung up and displayed like salami in an Italian deli. The queen, Thetis, is then forced by her husband to eat his flesh and drink wine from his bloody skull in a public banquet. Sometimes the lust for consumption leads to necrophilia. The erotic draw of the exquisite corpse is evident in popular plays like *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello* but is most striking in Middleton's *The Lady's Tragedy*, in which a character known only as "the Lady" kills herself to avoid being raped by a tyrant. The tyrant then exhumes the Lady's body and stages her corpse at court as a necrophilic display of his desire and possession. Disguised as a "painter," the Lady's lover and rightful king paints her lips with poison, which the tyrant kisses and dies.

Although most avengers in Renaissance tragedy are men, women exert an irresistible gravitational pull toward destruction and gain increasing agency on the Jacobean stage. The cannibal motif undergoes displacement and the generative body of the female becomes a threat to male potency and agency. In her discussion of revenge tragedy, Alison Findlay writes, "For male revengers, the

illusion of agency is always shadowed by the danger of self-annihilation, a dissolution of the masculine self into the feminine task. The ghosts of the furies and of Procne, Philomel, and Medea hover in the wings of Renaissance tragedies as silent mothers of the action whose presence can overwhelm the protagonist, dissolve his independent identity as a powerful member of the dominant sex" (Findlay 1999, pp. 61–62). The female presence in revenge tragedy is registered in a number of ways. For instance, in *Titus Andronicus* and *The Bloody Banquet*, the image of a monstrous, devouring pit becomes a guiding motif. In *Titus Andronicus* the pit is displayed onstage while Lavinia's rape and dismemberment are hidden from view. As she is savaged by the Goth brothers, Chiron and Demetrius, her own brothers tumble into a pit (a figuration of her rape) into which her murdered husband's body has been dumped. As Marjorie Garber says, "...the audience of *Titus Andronicus* is put on notice, by the rape of Lavinia and by the 'pit,' 'womb,' or 'bloodstained hole' that swallows up the young Andronici, that we have entered a new kind of theatrical world, one in which imagery, staging, and dramatic action work together to create a visceral effect of lust and horror" (Garber 2004, p. 79). For Findlay, the pit in *The Bloody Banquet* into which men stumble or their corpses are hurled "...symbolizes ravenous, ungoverned appetites associated with revenge, lust, and the cycle of mortality represented by the devouring and life-giving earth" (pp. 62–63).

The emasculating *vagina dentata* of folklore exists in the forests outside of courtly, phallic control and serves as a reminder of the terrible power of the feminine at the center of male desire—and anxiety. Carol Clover deems the "Terrible Place" of horror films—often subterranean tunnel complexes, cavernous chambers, or basements where the dramas of the id play out—as "a venerable element of horror" (Clover 1992, p. 30). General Titus becomes oddly feminized as he moves into a domestic space turned hellish: the kitchen where he prepares the Thyestean banquet for his enemy. His self-hood has been devoured, his family annihilated. Tamora's family is also eaten—Chiron and Demetrius are devoured by their "unhallow'd dam," and Tamora herself is left unburied, food for the birds and beasts outside of Roman walls. *Titus Andronicus* is a play about families, perhaps the origin and the central target of horror.

Revenge tragedians exploit an archetypal narrative structure that compels an audience's attention to violent and repulsive spectacles. The mythic patterning winds its way among folktale motifs dreaded by children and repressed in adults: incest, dismemberment, cannibalism, and a terrible psychosexual space hidden from ordinary view. The old crone's kitchen in the story of Hansel and Gretel, Leatherface's "meat room," where he hooks and dismembers bodies in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), the cellar-cum-pantry in *The Road* (2006) where post-apocalyptic cannibals store living people for food, the space in Titus's house where he ritualistically renders the bodies of Chiron and Demetrius, slitting their throats while Lavinia collects their blood in a bowl held between her stumps—such spaces engender reversals of fortune while

compelling witnesses to confront the dark, primordial horror of the human condition: we are ravenous meat-eaters driven by vengeance, appetite, restlessness, and cupidity to dominate and consume rivals and even loved ones, as if filling a void. *Titus Andronicus* exploits these terrible motifs, but the nuclear family comes under particular scrutiny in John Webster's "modern" play, *The Duchess of Malfi*.

Exploring the recurrent motifs in post-1960 horror film, Robin Wood identifies several scions of that initial institution, the family, including "The Terrible Child" and "Cannibalism" (Wood 2003, p. 75). Wes Craven comments that:

The family is the best microcosm to work with. If you go much beyond that you're getting away from a lot of the roots of our own primeval feelings. Let's face it, most of the basic stories and basic feelings involve very few people: Mommy, Daddy, me, siblings and the people in the other room. I like to stay within that circle. It's very much where most of our strong emotions or gut feelings come from. It's from those very early experiences and how they are worked out. I grew up in a white working-class family that was very religious, and there was an enormous amount of secrecy in the general commerce of our getting along with each other. Certain things were not mentioned. A lot of things were not spoken or talked about. If there was an argument it was immediately denied. If there was a feeling it was repressed. As I got older I began to see that as a nation we were doing the same thing. (as cited in Wood 2003, p. 111)

Revenge horror begins with violence inflicted on a family member, and the ensuing stabbing and counter-stabbing often obliterate a family, a microcosm of the state and, therefore, a trope for a damaged political system. The pattern is clear in most revenge tragedies: "Alarbus' limbs are lopped," egging on Tamora, and Lavinia is then raped and disfigured, leading to the *next* interfamilial murder (I.i.146). The familial horror in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, however, is more complex and modern in flavor. The Duchess is a widow in a powerful Italian family. Her brothers, Ferdinand and "the Cardinal," are heads of state and church. She marries Antonio Bologna, master of her household, and has three children by him. The marriage is kept secret from her power-hungry brothers, who see marriage as a political alliance. The marriage is outed by the spy, Bosola, and the brothers smell out and dismantle the nuclear family hidden at the center of court power in sinister fashion. The atmosphere of dread and impending death is most evident in the suffering and martyrdom of the Duchess, which reads like modern-day torture porn. The Duke visits his sister in the dark and gives her a dead man's hand, bidding her kiss it. Men enter with torches, illuminating a chamber of horrors—waxen figures resembling the corpses of her husband and children. "Oh horrible!" a stunned Duchess stammers, "What witchcraft does he practice, that he hath left a dead man's hand here?" (IV.i.55). Madmen are released to interrupt her sleep by howling at the moon. Executioners then throttle the Duchess and strangle her waiting woman and two youngest children. The Duke becomes unhinged, howling like a wolf and stalking the night bearing exhumed limbs. Critics

associate the Duke's lycanthropy with incestuous desire and necrophilia (Leech 1963; Mitchell and Wright 1975; Whigham 1991). Such taboo motifs will later be exploited by Poe, most notably in "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839).

The horror of the waxen figures in the above sequence would not be lost on B-movie fans. The *Horrors of the Black Museum* (1959), for example, exploits the human eye as fear source by featuring a pair of binoculars that thrusts spring-loaded spikes into unsuspecting eyeballs. Perhaps the ascendancy of the wax museum horror film, though, is *House of Wax* (1953). Henry Jarrod (Vincent Price) is a sculptor of waxen figures, an artist dedicated to the ideal of beauty (his one "concession to the macabre" was Joan of Arc at the stake). He turns to bitter vengeance after his museum is torched as part of an insurance scam. Jarrod survives the arson, a cripple with quasi-functional claws in place of hands. A hideously deformed figure takes to prowling the streets at night, killing and procuring bodies. Assisted by Igor (Charles Bronson), a menacing deaf-mute, Jarrod leads a double life as an artist cum killer, concealing his partially melted head with a mask of wax.

Jarrod traffics in body parts. Alongside a guillotine, waxen heads line the shelves of his "house of horrors," and limbs, hands, and feet are scattered throughout the underground chamber of the museum. Separated body parts become fetish-objects here as they do in horror fiction like Robert Kirkman's graphic novel series, *The Walking Dead*, and a host of revenge plays (e.g. dismembered hands and heads in *Titus Andronicus*, the tongue of Hieronimo, the head of Junior Brother from *The Revenger's Tragedy*, and the disembodied hand from *The Duchess of Malfi*). Like the breast to a suckling baby, separated body parts function as part-objects in the drama of subject formation and interpersonal relations, but severed members in horror may also represent the great separator: death. Freud dubs the nostalgic sense of familiar strangeness "the uncanny," linking it to that which "arouses dread and horror" (Freud 2010, p. 825). The uncanny is something familiar from childhood that is repressed and then recurs. The paradoxical feeling evinced by the return of the repressed is that of the un-familiar, the un-homely. Repression is activated by a childhood fear of being blinded, "a substitute for the dread of being castrated" (p. 831). Among the doubtful objects causing fear and a feeling of the uncanny are ghosts and spirits (the return of the dead), "waxwork figures, ingeniously constructed dolls and automata ... [d]ismembered limbs, a severed head, a hand cut off at the wrist" (pp. 828, 835).

The severed hand in *The Duchess of Malfi* may have a source in Henry Boguet's "Of the Metamorphosis of Men into Beasts, and especially of Lycanthropes or Loups-garoux," at least as far as Tricomi is concerned (Tricomi 2004b, p. 349). Boguet recounts a "true event" in 1588: a wolf attacks a hunter, fleeing after its paw is severed. The hunter secures the paw in his bag, presenting the trophy to a local gentleman. The paw, however, had transformed into a human hand with a ring on its finger. The gentleman finds his wife nursing a bleeding stump, and the ring is final proof that she is a werewolf. The severed hand links Webster's play to occult practices and witchcraft, notably the

“Main de Gloire” (“hand of glory”), a corpse’s hand used to cast spells. About the time Boguet’s text was in circulation, a “true discourse” of the career of the most notorious Renaissance werewolf, Stubbe Peeter, appeared (1590). Stubbe, a “Wicked Sorcerer,” was in league with Satan and could transform to a wolf with the help of a demonic girdle (Otten 1986, p. 69). For twenty-five years he raped and cannibalized the inhabitants of a small town in Germany in the guise of a pleasant neighbor. In 1612, the same year Webster began writing *The Duchess of Malfi*, the Lancashire witch trials took place, stoking fears of the occult and prompting Webster to include details like Ferdinand’s “pictures in wax,” items placed in dunghills and used to enchant victims from a distance (Tricomi 2004b, pp. 352–353).

The glut of severed body parts and their use as stage properties, along with excessive and ingenious violence, make for absurd, ironic humor (the tragic mode of theater today). Horror films are often absurdly grotesque and self-parodying, and many might be labeled “horror-comedies”—almost any zombie film would fit this category, for example. Early modern revenge tragedy always includes comic elements, which seem to become progressively more savage. *Titus Andronicus*, for instance, revels in puns about hands after two characters lose theirs, and Lavinia exits one scene with her father’s recently severed hand in her mouth. T.S. Eliot called *The Jew of Malta* a “tragic farce” (Eliot 1964, p. 28), and Harold Bloom compared the play’s villain-avenger, Barabas, to Groucho Marx—“the sublime Groucho” (Bloom 1986, p. 7). *The Revenger’s Tragedy*, which is perhaps a send-up of the entire genre, contains too many comic scenes to list, though the scene in which the buffoons, Ambitioso and Supercapuo, beat a messenger with the head of their younger brother whom they inadvertently killed may be one of the funniest scenes in all of Jacobean drama. Whatever the reason for the black humor—to savagely parody social conditions and mores, to heighten the tragedy through grotesque irony, to reduce humans, with their aspirations and sense of self-importance to laughable parasites, or perhaps to provide comic relief before the next jolt of misfortune or dismemberment—it is a staple of revenge horror.

Laughter, or at least a smirk, may provide a measure of release and clarification, but violence and gore are also prime ingredients in the revenge horror ragout prescribed by early modern dramatist-cooks. To consume this concoction is to follow the Jacobean prescription for emotional purgation and humoral balance, both in the body of the individual and in the political body. Violence cleanses perceptions. As a necessary element in Aristotelian tragedy, the “scene of suffering”—an *ecce homo* on the classical stage, bursting blood-bladders in Renaissance theaters—is cathartic. City dwellers also read lurid, mass-produced material like the monstrous children broadsides (featuring deformed children like the Much Horkesley Monster or the Ruffs Monster), watched bear-baiting, and witnessed public executions. The real atrocities the people of early modern London might encounter in their lives might themselves, as instigators of unconscious anxieties, then prompt people to seek new sources of purgation, like taking ipecac to induce vomiting after food poisoning. People were

accustomed to seeing horrific sights on a regular basis. We are too, but in slightly different ways. We see embedded photographers bringing us up close and personal with the horrors of war and disaster in various parts of the world. We see acts of terrorism with blood flowing and bodies sundered. We watch videos of cops shooting people in traffic stops. Visually consuming monstrosities and subversion on stage or screen may relieve some of the diurnal pressure. The avenger who finds himself in a tragedy, though, lacks the luxury of distance from the horrors of the world.

Perverse desires, gruesome murders, labyrinthine revenge plots, and the sense that malevolence ever waits for its patient, scheming satisfaction: horror aficionados who have not delved deeply into English Renaissance drama may react with surprise at the connections between some of the most popular plays of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean periods and the subject of chilling, palpable horror in modern fiction and cinema. It is tempting to argue that the sense of horror is universal in human experience. Certainly, there is no historical age in which accounts of horrible events may not be found. Some eras, however, seem determined to focus their energies upon the fiction of manners, of the comedic, of the vulgar, or of the tragic but not the horrible. The experiences in common, at least in essence if not in detail, between the modern world and Renaissance theater seem to have struck both the creators and the consumers of drama and fiction in these distant eras with a resonant muse. Jacobean blood revenge horror tells its audience that injustices can be avenged and monsters vanquished. But there is no return home, only death at quest's end. To triumph, the hero-avenger must become the monster he fights, perhaps even worse than that he fights. The tragedies of revenge horror demand recognition that each of us harbors such a monster within and that there are no safe spaces where such monsters cannot surface.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allman, Eileen. 1999. *Jacobean Revenge Tragedy and the Politics of Virtue*. Newark: University of Delaware Press.
- Bate, Jonathan. 1995. Introduction. In *Titus Andronicus*, ed. William Shakespeare, 1–121. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Bloom, Harold. 1986. Introduction. In *Christopher Marlowe: Modern Critical Views*, 1–7. New York: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Clover, Carol. 1992. *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Eliot, T.S. 1964. *Elizabethan Essays*. New York: Haskell House.
- Findlay, Alison. 1999. *A Feminist Perspective on Renaissance Drama*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Freud, Sigmund. 2010. The 'Uncanny'. In *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch, 824–841. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Garber, Marjorie. 2004. *Shakespeare After All*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. 1997. Introduction. In *The Norton Shakespeare Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. William Shakespeare, 1–76. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

- Leech, Clifford. 1950. *Shakespeare's Tragedies*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- . 1963. *Webster: The Duchess of Malfi (Studies in English Literature)*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Mitchell, Giles, and Eugene Wright. 1975. Duke Ferdinand's Lycanthropy as a Disguise Motive in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*. *Literature and Psychology* 25: 117–123.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2000. Beyond Good and Evil. In *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, 179–436. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House Inc.
- Otten, Charlotte F. 1986. A True Discourse Declaring the Damnable Life and Death of One Stubbe Peeter. In *A Lycanthropy Reader: Werewolves in Western Culture*, ed. Charlotte F. Otten, 69–76. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Tricomi, Albert H. 2004a. The Aesthetics of Mutilation in *Titus Andronicus*. In *Shakespeare and Language*, ed. Catherine M.S. Alexander, 226–239. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2004b. The Severed Hand in Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*. *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 44: 347–358. Accessed May 26, 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3844634>.
- Whigham, Frank. 1991. Incest and Ideology. In *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, ed. David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass, 263–274. New York: Routledge.
- Wood, Robin. 2003. *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan ... And Beyond*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Wymer, Rowland. 2003. Jacobean Tragedy. In *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, ed. Michael Hattaway, 545–555. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.



“A Mass of Unnatural and Repulsive Horrors”: Staging Horror in Nineteenth-Century English Theater

Sarah A. Winter

In literary and theater history criticism, “horror” is not often specifically applied to nineteenth-century British drama. Works on theater terrors in the 1800s fall within the following parameters and hold a predominant focus on the London stage: “Gothic dramas” in the early part of the century, mostly set against medieval backdrops with aristocratic tyrants, ghosts, and fantastical monster villains; grisly crime plots theatricalizing the exploits of highwaymen and murderers; and stage apparitions conjured up in Victorian shows by using theater technologies for staging the supernatural, such as the “Corsican Trap” in Dion Boucicault’s *The Corsican Brothers* (1852) and the stage trick, “Pepper’s Ghost.”¹ Critics including Francesca Saggini, Diego Saglia, Jeffrey N. Cox, Diane Long Hoeveler, David Worrall, and Paula R. Backscheider have constructed solid foundations in scholarship on the area, from Gothic drama’s often politically charged content performed over the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars and the later frightening spectacles.² Yet, horror as a distinct mode, and the mechanics behind productions for intentionally terrifying audiences, has received relatively less focused attention. By examining a representative selection of plays based on the Frankenstein narrative, Sweeney Todd and

Some of the author’s material on George Dibdin Pitt’s Sweeney Todd melodrama first appeared in the *Journal of Adaptation in Film & Performance* (volume 8, issue 3: 2015).

S. A. Winter (✉)
New College Durham, Durham, UK

ghostly vengeance in *The Bells* (1871), and the carefully planned plots, stage technologies, and characterizations, I uncover calculated aims to horrify audiences across the era. Through the shifts in the delivery of stage terror, I also unveil the innovative experimentation with horror that took place in the nineteenth-century theater worlds.

As the early Gothic novelist Ann Radcliffe asserted, the emotion of “horror” exceeds “terror”: the latter sharpens our alertness, whereas the former leaves us physically vulnerable, as the emotion “contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates” the senses (Radcliffe 1826, p. 149). Horror, then, as both a feeling and a genre, incorporates the notion of the extreme and transcending boundaries, which is evident in nineteenth-century theater’s plethora of gore, violence, and exploration of stage techniques for updating methods to terrify audiences. These stage horrors were often attached to social anxieties, which are a fundamental aspect of the horror genre. As Gina Wisker summarizes in her assessment of literature and film, horror expresses “that of which we cannot speak, our deep-seated longings and terrors, and then, once they have been embodied, acted out, they are managed. Order is restored (if only temporarily)” (2005, p. 2). Reinstating order after upheaval is also a common theme attributed to nineteenth-century melodrama, which encompassed many horror plays—the villains are vanquished, families and star-crossed lovers are reunited, and a sense of justice is played out in the *coup de théâtre*. However, as Simon Shepherd astutely notes on the melodramatic mode in general, “points of arrival” in the often conservative-toned finales “are not necessarily points of achieved stability” (1994, p. 34). Horror plays may show the curtain falling on the villain’s spectacular downfall, but their receptive engagement with real life emphasized that pressing concerns offstage were ongoing. It is also important to acknowledge that the productions’ popularity was fuelled by the pure thrill of being scared, as we still share in our insatiable enjoyment of horror films, literature, theater, and video gaming. This fusion of chilling frissons and bringing fears to the surface makes the mode’s contemporary manifestations coterminous with nineteenth-century horror plays.

“Monster melodrama,” as termed by theater historian Michael Booth, hosted a variety of fantastical villains to enthrall audiences and paraded new stage technologies for sensationalizing the action (1965, p. 84). Yet, beneath the excesses, there were nuanced methods in place to disturb and create suspense. One of the most popular villains was Mary Shelley’s Creature from her novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818). The first English adaptation was penned by Richard Brinsley Peake, titled *Presumption; or, The Fate of Frankenstein* (1823), performed at the English Opera House (the site of the present Lyceum Theatre). As shown in a report by *The Times* on Peake’s play, sensational dramas were often denigrated: “The piece upon the whole has little to recommend it; but that, as times go, will be no great obstacle to its success” (Anon. 1823a, p. 3). The play was clearly disregarded as populist and without much theatrical value, a trend which became affixed to melodrama throughout the nineteenth century. Melodrama and other illegitimate dramas (so-called as

they were performed primarily in "minor theaters" outside the legitimized patent theater circuit) were often devalued by such reviews, which in turn swept aside playwrights' efforts for generating horror.³ Shelley saw the play, and although she praised the much-loved Thomas Potter Cooke's enactment of the Creature in a letter, she wrote that overall "the story is not well managed" (Shelley 1980, p. 378). But, tellingly, her observation that the production "appeared to excite a breathless eagerness in the audience" suggests powerful effects upon the spectators (Shelley 1980, p. 378). The creation scene particularly cranked up the tension and affected viewers. The Creature's awakening has been immortalized in the cultural imagination by Colin Clive's ecstatic outburst "it's alive!" in James Whale's *Frankenstein* film (1931). Interestingly, Peake's play foreshadowed Whale's renowned line, when Frankenstein cries out, "it lives!" (both are absent in the novel). Unlike the majority of later play and film versions, though, the Creature's "birth" in the laboratory is entirely cloaked from view in Peake's production. Although melodrama was (and still is) predominantly equated with excess and spectacle, *Frankenstein's* most famous scene was staged through tantalizing obscurity, which indicates careful planning for affecting the audience, as they were kept on the edge of their seats in anticipation of seeing the Creature, paralleling the "breathless eagerness" Shelley witnessed.⁴

The scene is set in Frankenstein's apartment in Geneva, with the laboratory's door and small lattice window above the stage interconnected by a staircase, and the stage directions emphasize the darkness of the *mise en scène*. Verbatim to the novel, Frankenstein utters that it is a "dreary night," and the directions evince that an atmospheric storm is conjured up by music and sound effects for thunder and rain: "*Music expressive of the rising of a storm. Enter Frankenstein [...] with a Lighted Lamp, which he places on the table. Distant thunder heard*" (Peake 1990, I. iii.142–143, emphasis original).⁵ The delivery was engineered for climactic effect, as the contrast between the darkness and Frankenstein's lamp elicits an eerie setting, encouraging the audience to lean in and observe the action more closely. The tension of seeing the results of the experiment is prolonged, as Frankenstein only gestures to the concealed area of his creation: "The object of my experiment lies there (*Pointing up to the Laboratory*)—a huge automaton in human form" (I.iii.143). Music—melodrama's central attribute—is then specifically applied to his leave, when he "*takes up lamp, cautiously looks around him, ascends the stairs, crosses the gallery above, and exits into door of laboratory*" (I.iii.143).⁶ His abrupt exit leaves the audience in suspense, which is accentuated by the mixture of a dark stage with glowing lamps and musical accompaniment. The merging of visual and audio effects plays a key part in steadily intensifying the building tension, which matches the following action's increased pace.

Immediately after Frankenstein's exit, his assistant Fritz enters the stage, and the creepiness of the scene by using light is continued as he is carrying a sole candle, which is soon extinguished, engulfing the stage in darkness.⁷ A sudden blue flame appears at the laboratory's window, tempting Fritz to ascend the

staircase and spy on Frankenstein, narrating what he sees, when “*a sudden combustion is heard within. The blue flame changes to one of a reddish hue*”—upon which Frankenstein cries out offstage, “It lives! it lives!” (I.iii.143). The growing energies taking place in the laboratory are matched by intensified music, as Fritz “*speaks through*” the score in order to carry on his reporting. Earlier instances of Fritz bringing some comic relief to the plot are now replaced with his sheer terror, which complements the frenzied pace and its synchronized music: “*Fritz, greatly alarmed, jumps down hastily, totters tremblingly down the stairs in vast hurry*” (I.iii.143). Frankenstein also “*rushes*” from the laboratory out to the dark gallery and “*fastens the door in apparent dread*” (I.iii.143). His horrified soliloquy on the being he has brought to life forms an apogee of the fluctuating darkness, lights, and frenetic energies by Fritz and the music: “It lives! I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open, it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs. [...] Ah, horror! his cadaverous skin scarcely covers the work of muscles and arteries beneath...” (I.iii.143). This shattering realization of his failed vision contrasts to previous optimism: “The beauty of my dream has vanished! and breathless horror and disgust now fill my heart. [...] The dreadful spectre of a human form—no mortal could withstand the horror of that countenance...” (I.iii.143).

The mechanics in the scene are calculated to arrest the audience in anticipation for the Creature’s eventual appearance: set against music, the revelatory moment draws together the visual and audio mechanics again, and the stage directions specify the Creature’s strange blue color (a choice of hue which Hoeveler suggests is a nod toward the supernatural connotations of blue light in Gothic poetry): “*Frankenstein sinks on a chair; sudden combustion heard, and smoke issues, the door laboratory breaks to pieces with a loud crash—red fire within.—The Monster discovered at door entrance in smoke, which evaporates—the red flame continues visible*” (Hoeveler 2016, p. 176, Peake I.iii.144). After the Creature’s attempts to greet Frankenstein are viciously rejected, his instant violence differs to the novel’s Creature, who is less belligerent when he first meets his creator: “*Music [...] The Monster then seizes Frankenstein—loud thunder heard—throws him violently on the floor, ascends the staircase, opens the large window [...] and disappears through the casement. Frankenstein remains motionless on the ground.—Thunder and lightning until the drop falls*” (I.iii.144). The build-up before the Creature’s appearance was crucial for striking the optimum horror into the audience, as shown in the *London Morning Post*: “In the first scene in which [he] makes his appearance, *the effect is terrific*. There are other parts in which a very powerful impression is produced on the spectators...” (Anon. 1823b, emphasis added). The resulting terrified reactions by the audience are specifically commented upon in the review: “There is something in the piecemeal resurrection effected by Frankenstein, which, instead of creating that awful interest intended to arise from it, gives birth to a feeling of horror” (Anon. 1823b). This impact demonstrates the effectiveness of veiling the narrative’s most sensational scene from the viewers. Moreover, under the excesses lay not only meticulous plotting to horrify but also resonances with current

anxieties. In the aftermath of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, lingering concerns remained that an uprising may be reignited by a small spark in the rising reformist momentum for equality in the 1820s, as voiced in the conservative *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, which warned that reformists' aim was "not to build up, but to pull down, and, while they bawl for reform, are intent upon revolution" (Anon. 1821, p. 492). As Steven Earl Forry proposes, the novel and stage adaptations were associated with revolutionary energies in the collective thought in Britain and France (1990, pp. 34–35). On close analysis of the language deployed in Peake's melodrama, allusions to the particularly tense political backdrop in the early 1820s are suggested. For example, there is a prominent emphasis on "animation," such as Frankenstein's optimistic outlook, "It will be animated! It will live—will think! [...] Like Prometheus of old, have I daringly attempted the formation—the animation of a Being!" (I.i.139). The Creature is also specifically called an "inanimate mass" in the creation scene, whereas the term is only used once in the novel, in a later part of the narrative. Thus, a dialogue can be seen between reportage on reformist movements and the stage, as the depiction of the Creature as a violent assembled "mass" suggests a reflection of the perceived thin line between growing numbers of reformists and an unruly uprising, therefore articulating fermenting concerns that the body politic may re-animate revolutionary sentiment.

Frankenstein's Creature forms one of many villains in early nineteenth-century monster melodrama. A strong rival was the vampire Lord Ruthven, in James Robinson Planché's *The Vampire; or, The Bride of the Isles: A Romantic Melo-drama* (1820). Yet, there was also a shift to more localized and realistic antagonists in the soaring rise of grisly crime melodramas during the early nineteenth century. The feverish press sensationalism on murder cases in cheap crime publications' *raison d'être* over the early to mid-decades parallels the increase of these murder melodramas, which focused on both real and fictional plots of murder, robberies, and highwaymen.⁸ Eminent examples include plays based on the real murder victims, William Weare and Maria Marten, in the 1820s. A particularly gory murder play was the stage debut of the Sweeney Todd character in 1847, which tied together the real and imaginative strands of the genre.⁹ The melodrama signposts a progression from the fantastical to more realistic representation of horror by the mid-nineteenth century, yet its bloody plot with gore, violence, and an unnervingly deceptive villain reveals that the change was by no means any less horrific.

Since his first appearance in an 1846–47 anonymous penny blood, the name "Sweeney Todd" remains famous, and his story still fuels the urban legend of a barber who murdered customers at 186 Fleet Street, before sending on the victims' remains to flesh out Mrs. Lovett's pie pastries. The barber was imagined for the publisher Edward Lloyd in *The People's Periodical and Family Library* and printed in installments from November 1846 to March 1847 under the title *The String of Pearls. A Romance*. Lloyd's shocking tale was first transferred to the stage before the serialization concluded: the final part was published on 20 March 1847, yet the playwright George Dibdin Pitt had already

spotted the penny blood's potential to thrill theater audiences and premiered the story on 1 March at Hoxton's Britannia theater (Weltman 2011, p. 1). It is broadly agreed in scholarship that the narrative was a fictional creation for Lloyd's publication, yet the tale has retained an apocryphal ether in the popular imagination, which can be traced back to the Victorian play. As Sharon Aronofsky Weltman notes in her fundamental work on the original 1847 manuscript, the play has a complex history, and there has been a tendency in previous scholarship to rely on a version printed in c.1883 (2011, p. 1). As the later text has more emphasis on comedy than horror, I propose that the roots of the urban legend of Todd lie within the 1847 text, as in departure from the penny blood, the play more persuasively encouraged the notion of Todd's authenticity through affectivity and changes to the source text.¹⁰ The serialization's title was changed to *The String of Pearls, or The Fiend of Fleet Street*, and "A Romance" was removed, diminishing suggestions of the tale's fictional content (Dibdin Pitt 2011, p. 30).¹¹ The title's addition of the real location, "Fleet Street," served as a reminder of the story's familiar setting to London theatergoers, and the reality was heightened further by the playbill's bold statement that the plot was "taken from the much admired Tale of that name (founded on fact) in 'Lloyd's People's Periodical'" (Weltman 2011, pp. 25–27).¹² The possible factuality of Todd was imposed further by his realistic portrayal on the stage. For example, both a strange appearance and personality are described in the penny blood: "The barber himself was a long, low-jointed, ill-put-together sort of fellow, with an immense mouth, and such huge hands and feet, that he was, in his way, quite a natural curiosity..." (Anon. 2007, p. 4).¹³ He emits random outbursts of laughter and is presented as being an "odd" character with "not much sense in him" (pp. 4–5). In sharp contrast, the stage Todd is a more banal and trustworthy character, as there are no stage directions or allusions to his laugh or striking appearance. Instead of an outwardly eccentric character, Todd's introductory stage direction details his appearance as "*stern and repulsive*" when in private, before switching on assuring charm for customers (I.ii.34). By making the barber more real and unassuming, he became more chilling, as the potential for an ordinary barber shop to transform into a site of horror was impressed upon the viewers.

The only detailed review currently known for the nineteenth-century production is by Thomas W. Erle. It is of a later performance after 1847 (yet before the 1883 version), but the source gives an insight into the show's forceful depiction of Todd's realness: "Dramatic impressions are so strong with me that I should not go out of my way to get my hair cut in Fleet Street just at present" (Erle 1862, p. 39).¹⁴ The amalgamation of theater's physicality and the modeling of Todd as authentic clearly cued a stage villain who broke down the walls between fiction and reality. In contrast to the later more comedic 1883 version, the 1847 manuscript is full of gory violence and framed around the narrative of a realistic villain, which, as Erle summarizes, provided plentiful horror: "An evening at the Britannia during the run of 'The String of

Pearls or The Barber Fiend of Fleet Street,’ was to sup full of horrors” (p. 19). Stage blood (often red ochre powder) was used to accentuate the murders, which focused the audience’s attention on Todd’s murder method. The general image of Todd killing customers sees them lying back in the barber’s chair with their necks precariously exposed, before he slits the jugular with a razor, then uses a lever or pedal to flip the chair and watch them slide backward through a trapdoor into the cellars. The act is less bloody in the original serialization—Todd simply excuses himself to a side room, where he pulls a lever to tip the chair backward and send customers straight through a trapdoor, hoping they will break their necks. The more gruesome image of Todd slashing throats has its origins in the 1847 play, as the chair contraption from the penny blood is dropped, with Todd stabbing his victims instead, making Dibdin Pitt the first to introduce Todd’s use of a sharp instrument for his *modus operandi* (Weltman 2011, p. 10). The stage directions detail that Todd disposes of the bodies by dropping them directly “*through a vampire trap*,” and the attacks are more grittily realistic in comparison to the generic imagining of neatly slicing across the neck, as shown in the customer Grant’s murder (which Todd’s apprentice Tobias nearly witnesses)¹⁵: “*Music [...] As Grant rises, Todd has his dagger ready and stabs him in the back then dashes him down the trap—as the trap closes Tobias enters bursting open the door—Todd standing over the trap aghast, at the same time his knife and hands bloody—Tableau*” (I.ii.37, 39). With music playing to embellish the horror, the quick switch of pace from Todd’s swift pounce and attack, to a sudden tableau, exaggerates his blood-soaked hands and deed.

The decision to focus on using a sharp object relates to the inundation of stabbing cases reported in newspapers during the period Dibdin Pitt was preparing his manuscript for the Lord Chamberlain, in early 1847, before submitting on 15 February.¹⁶ As an example, the *Morning Chronicle* reported in January on Thomas Purton’s murder of a woman by beating and stabbing her, as he had returned illegally after being transported abroad and feared she would report him (Anon. 1847a, p. 1). Less than a week later, the *Morning Post* reported on Richard Midhurst’s charge for stabbing Daniel Hayley, who could not speak—yet it turned out that a knife had been thrown at him by an assailant, and his sign gestures for explaining the incident had been misinterpreted (Anon. 1847b, p. 7). The report bears a close parallel to a moment in the play when Todd throws his “knife” at Tobias (I.ii.40). A further case in the reportage’s incessant flow of stabbings also aligns with the play, as it happened in the workplace: only a couple of days after the Midhurst case, the *Daily News* reported that a foot-long hot iron cooking skewer was utilized as a stabbing weapon during an argument between two men in a public house’s kitchen (Anon. 1847c, p. 4). The report’s detail of how ordinary objects could be quickly mechanized for malevolence parallels the play’s emphasis on Todd’s double façade of a barber shop and his more banal veneer produced from the adaptation process.

The play's stabbings are accompanied by music, which attracted Erle's attention in the scene when Todd's murders are revealed: "At this point a torrent of fiddles is let loose, which rasp away for some moments with an energy worthy of the crisis" (Erle 1862, p. 22). The meticulous pairing of the music's "energy" with the scene uncovers the planned procedures for horror, and the term "Chord" in the play's directions implies incisive riffs of string music, which later thrived in classic horror scores, such as Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960). Yet, despite these effective mechanics in the play, horror often received deprecatory reviews, as a moralistic remark by Erle exemplifies: "[I] think that the representation of such a mass of unnatural and repulsive horrors is extremely wrong and pernicious" (p. 28). In a similar approach to frequent modern perceptions of horror films as vile schlock, horror was also disparaged in nineteenth-century theater circles. Indeed, Erle's opinion echoes Britain's "video nasties" furore in the 1980s, which saw rushed legislation to regulate horror films amidst public panic over horror video tapes inciting violence by young people: "For the contemplation, or vivid description, of an act of wickedness, frequently, as is perfectly well known, inoculates weak minds with an irresistible impulse to do the same kind of thing" (p. 28). Horror has been relentlessly plagued by attacks on its perceived depravity, which subsequently overlooks the complex methodologies for both terrifying audiences and getting under their skin, by addressing the most current societal anxieties.

After the sensationalism and gore of monster and murder plays, a subtler form of horror theater emerged in the later part of the nineteenth century. The masterful blending of the quasi-supernatural and psychological depths in Leopold Davis Lewis's *The Bells* (1871) is a canonical example of Victorian theater's ghostly stages. The narrative of repressed guilt and retribution catapulted the acting sensation Henry Irving to fame, and his scintillating performances left a legacy which actors admired and aspired to match (Mayer 2004, p. 388). *The Bells*, adapted from the original French version performed as an opera in 1869, debuted at the Lyceum Theatre in November 1871 and became a firm favorite on late nineteenth-century billboards. The plot follows the story of the seemingly respectable burgomaster Mathias in a French village, who in fact secretly murdered a traveling Jewish man fifteen years before the opening of the play (the victim is later named Kovesky toward the conclusion). On the anniversary night of the murder and the eve of his daughter's wedding, overwhelming memories and ghostly sights of Mathias's deed haunt him, and it is left to the audience to decide whether the visions are supernatural or the workings of his guilt, which, as George Taylor notes, introduced "a new kind of psychological melodrama" (1989, p. 153). The use of music again plays a vital role for heightening the tension through impactful chords, in addition to the diegetic sound of the bells from the victim's sleigh, which intermittently ring out to mercilessly remind Mathias of his crime.

There are two re-enactments of the night of the murder: the first sees Kovesky appearing behind Mathias, which has the following suspenseful prelude:

Mathias: (*alone—comes forward and listens with terror. Music with frequent chords.*)

Bells! Bells! [...]

(*Clock strikes ten.*)

I feel a darkness coming over me.

(*Stage darkens.*) (Lewis 1872, I.i.12)¹⁷

The “frequent chords” are combined with optical effects for pulling the audience further into Mathias’s psyche, as the sudden darkness of the stage reflects his sense of something ominous approaching. The scene of the snowy night and the victim’s sleigh is assembled behind a gauze, with softened limelight by “frosting” the lighting’s lenses, emanating an eerie glow upon the setting (Mayer 2004, p. 403). The audience views the past Mathias sneaking up behind the sleigh, with a “hood over his head, carrying an axe, [and] stands in an attitude of following the sledge; when the picture is fully disclosed the Bells cease” (I.i.12). The technique of suddenly cutting off the bells protracts the tension of the impending attack, before the present Mathias turns and is confronted by the vision of his past self and victim:

He rises and turns; goes up stage; starts violently upon seeing the vision before him; at the same time the Jew in the sledge suddenly turns his face, which is ashy pale, and fixes his eyes sternly upon him; Mathias utters a prolonged cry of terror, and falls senseless—hurried Music. (I.i.13)

After the bells stop to strain the macabre scene, the victim’s ghostly face turns into view, with the horror of the vision accentuated by sudden “hurried” music.

The audience had to wait until the play’s final act for the murder, which, in comparison to Sweeney Todd’s gruesome assaults, was depicted through a far subtler approach. The crime is played out in an apparent dream sequence, which is suggested to possibly be a supernatural encounter. A “president” judge figure presides over a crowd of spectators, and a mesmerist uses hypnosis to extract Mathias’s confession. Psychological crossovers between the stage action and spectatorship are particularly evident here, as the audience’s witnessing of Mathias’s confession merges with the court scene’s crowd, showing a further technique for immersing the viewers into the play. It is revealed he murdered in order to steal Kovesky’s possessions to pay off debts, by following him to a secluded area, brandishing an ax:

(*The noise of the Bells increase—the Crowd express alarm simultaneously—all at once Mathias springs forward, and with a species of savage roar, strikes a terrible blow with his right hand*) Ah! ah! I have you now, Jew! (*He strikes again—the Crowd simultaneously express horror—Mathias leans forward and gazes anxiously on the ground—he extends his hand as if to touch something, but draws it back in horror*) He does not move! (III.i.28)

The murder is portrayed to be acted out solely by Mathias in his hypnosis, which received much commendation in reviews, with one viewer reporting that the scene was “depicted by Mr. Irving with a degree of energy that, fully realising the horror of the situation, seems to hold the audience in suspense” (Anon. 1871a, p. 4). The combination of string chords, the bells as constant reminders of Mathias’s appalling act, light effects, and Irving’s powerful acting created a terrifying experience in the Lyceum Theatre, which reviews capture: “It was a scene which one watches and listens to with breathless horror, and a few among the audience were disposed to express some disapprobation. Speedily, however, these signs gave way to loud and continuous applause” (Anon. 1871b, p. 13). Echoing Mary Shelley’s observation of “breathless eagerness,” *The Bells* is a further example of nineteenth-century horror theater stunning the audience. However, this psychological melodrama brought something new to previous plays, as viewers were extremely affected, which is embodied in contemporary theatergoers’ reminiscences: “So directly did Irving gaze into his audiences’ faces and share Mathias’s self-revealing momentary terror with them that women, now suddenly complicit in his guilty secret, screamed and fainted” (Mayer 2004, p. 401). Some accounts may have sensationalized receptions to the play for publicity, but there is an identifiable trend of the show’s ability to horrify in the reviews. I suggest these more intense reactions were due to the psychological tension of the play. The way the audience was played with, and the continuously matched changes in pace with music and lighting, simply overloaded their senses, making them more susceptible to sudden shocks and Irving’s extraordinary emotional intensity. The acclaim of his performance is particularly shown by the finale, when a death knell tolls at the end of the dream sequence, which merges with his daughter’s wedding bells, thus indicating the close of the supposed dream. Mathias is seen strangling from an invisible noose and desperately yelling “Cut the rope!” before expiring, leaving an astounded silence on the debut night: “On Saturday it was not till the curtain fell, and they summoned the actor before it with a storm of acclamation, that they seemed to recover their self-possession” (Lewis III.i.30, Anon. 1871a, p. 4).

This shift to a more understated style of horror coincided with early explorations of the unconscious and repression, before Sigmund Freud’s groundbreaking work gave delineated terms and focused understanding. As David Mayer notes, *The Bells* is “part of a larger literary, theatrical and scientific phenomenon visible in the final quarter of the nineteenth century [of] identifying and depicting the ‘double self’” (p. 398). Irving’s sensational portrayal of unconscious forces rising to the surface is a prominent example of this early psychological exploration, before Freud fronted the early twentieth century’s publications on the workings of the mind, which waved in the defining era of psychological study (Mayer 2004, p. 398). The play voiced these earlier notions about the “double self” by raising the unnerving possibility of monstrosity lurking behind reputability. Additionally, both the plot and affectivity of the play make the production’s psychological depths twofold: the narrative plays

out the secrets of Mathias's inner mind through suggested supernaturalism and affective delivery, and, in the process, the audiences' senses were manipulated through searing tension, emotion, and uncertainty over the supernatural narrative, making the plot a vehicle for providing the viewers' own psychological journey. Due to this progressive concoction of slowly stirring up the horror to disturb spectators, their senses were overwhelmed by the tension and suspense, which had not been generated in quite the same way in more bloody and violent past productions.¹⁸ As mentioned near the start, horror seeks to push boundaries, which *The Bells* achieved by submerging the audience into an intense psychological experience, anticipating the later "psychological thriller" branch of horror films, as their antecedents lie in the pioneering techniques developed in *The Bells*. Indeed, the plot device of blurring the lines between personal inner turmoil and supernatural experience is a prevalent trope in horror, seen in works such as Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) and Stephen King's *The Shining* (1977) and their film adaptations. The techniques of affecting audiences' senses through suspense and horror, and playing with their minds by leaving them guessing, can all be ultimately traced back to horror mechanics in nineteenth-century theater.

Due to an encroaching taste for frivolity and comedy by the end of the nineteenth century, particularly influenced by the rise of music halls, horror theater declined by the *fin de siècle*, but the stage shocks' legacies lived on in both theater and film.¹⁹ The major example is the Grand-Guignol, which originated in the late nineteenth-century Théâtre du Grand-Guignol, Paris, then traveled across the Channel to London in the early twentieth century, where it enjoyed a particularly successful run between 1920 and 1922 at the West End's Little Theatre (Hand and Wilson 2007, pp. 3, 88).²⁰ The plays showcased extreme terror, nuanced tension, and violence (much to the Examiner of Plays' ire in London), modes which transferred to the screen during horror film's mighty rise in the twentieth century, raising strong competition for horror theater.²¹ Horror movies clearly remain the more popular and lucrative medium in the present day, yet, as illustrated in this chapter, nineteenth-century theater's experimentation with horror built the core foundations of horror film. Moreover, in our high-tech age, horror theater has been further side-lined by cutting-edge cinematic and televisual advances. However, although contemporary filmic techniques strive to create an immersive viewing experience, the screen still separates us from the action. By contrast, the nature of theater's close physical presence provides the crucial charge for stage horror's unique power. This corporeality, mixed in with melodramatic excess and affectivity, was utilized by nineteenth-century playwrights in multiple forms to terrify audiences, making these plays progenitors of the Grand-Guignol, horror film, and of course contemporary horror theater, with a popular example being Stephen Mallatratt's hair-raising adaptation of Susan Hill's *The Woman in Black* (1983; 1987). Mallatratt's play is part of only a small minority of long-running successes, including the modern incarnation of Sweeney Todd in Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street: A Musical Thriller*

(1979) and Andrew Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera* (1986). Yet, a recent wave of acclaimed fresh productions indicates a potent resurgence in horror theater's popularity, as particularly seen in Nick Dear and Danny Boyle's *Frankenstein* (2011), Jack Thorne's adaptation of John Ajvide Lindqvist's rapidly canonized vampire novel *Let the Right One In* (2004; 2013), and interesting projects in 2013 and 2015, respectively, when horror theater and film joined forces in Rebecca Lenkiewicz's staging of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* and Anthony Neilson's adaptation of Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, both co-produced with Hammer. The similarly fraught psychological tension in the texts was effectively played out, suggesting the narratives' claustrophobic suspense complemented the intimacy of the theater setting.²² Hammer ventures even further into theater with their inaugural "immersive" promenade show in October 2017 (18+ only), staged rather fittingly in the restored nineteenth-century entertainment venue, Hoxton Hall.²³ It seems apparent, then, after the long reign of horror film, that horror theater is steadily resurfacing from the darkness of cinema's shadow.

NOTES

1. For further details on nineteenth-century stage technologies used for conjuring up spectral illusions, see David J. Jones, *Gothic Machine: Textualities, Pre-Cinematic Media and Film in Popular Visual Culture, 1670–1910* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011).
2. It is important to note that "Gothic drama" (which intrinsically incorporates horror, due to the permeable lines between the Gothic and horror fields) is widely accepted in criticism as distinct from "melodrama," yet it is also generally agreed they share important overlaps. The debate over how to distinguish between Gothic drama and melodrama has raised complexities—for example, see Matthew Buckley (2014, p. 422) and Diane Long Hoeveler (2010, p. 143). I explore this issue in depth in my PhD thesis by asserting melodrama's integral Gothic origins and perennial content across long nineteenth-century English theater and assess when and why melodrama fell into its pejorative connotations of excess and frivolity, which are far displaced from the genre's prevalent horror dimensions in the era—see "Gothic Stages: The Rise and Fall of English Melodrama 1790–1890" (unpublished PhD thesis, Northumbria University, 2014).
3. Jane Moody provides a thorough study of London's minor theater culture in *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
4. Diego Saglia discusses Gothic theater's offstage "virtual space" in his analysis of stage adaptations of Radcliffe's novels and argues that "the offstage dimension bears crucially on the affectively impactful representations of space in Gothic drama and theatre"—see "'A Portion of the Name': Stage Adaptations of Radcliffe's Fiction, 1794–1806", in *Ann Radcliffe, Romanticism and the Gothic*, ed. Dale Townshend and Angela Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 223.

5. All subsequent page references are from the John Dicks edition in Forry's collection and are given in parentheses after quotations in the text. I have selected Dicks's edition of the play rather than the earlier Larpent manuscript, as the latter was submitted for licensing before performance, and additionally, the later version contains more stage direction details (see Forry, p. 134). The Larpent version is available in Cox, *Seven Gothic Dramas* (1992). All stage directions in the chapter's discussed plays are original emphases.
6. Melodrama introduced a new method of using music in theater, as the accompaniment specifically matched and emphasized specific points of the action. "Melo" is derived from the Greek "melos," meaning "music"—for further analysis on melodrama's music, see Anne Dhu Shapiro, "Nineteenth-Century Melodrama: From *A Tale of Mystery* to *Monte Cristo*," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 2 (1991).
7. As many critics have noted, Fritz is an early manifestation of Egor in later adaptations of the story (the figure of a laboratory assistant is absent in the novel).
8. For specific dates on the increase and fall of crime literature such as broadsides and penny bloods, see Rosalind Crone's *Violent Victorians: Popular Entertainment in Nineteenth-Century London* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 115.
9. Some of the chapter's material on George Dibdin Pitt's Sweeney Todd melodrama first appeared in my article "'His Knife and Hands Bloody': Sweeney Todd's Journey from Page to Stage – Melodrama, Adaptation and the Original 1847 Manuscript," *Journal of Adaptation in Film & Performance* 8.3 (2015a).
10. I explore the 1847 play's active role in fuelling Todd's urban legend in more depth in my article, which includes comparative analysis between the original manuscript and its later 1883 redaction: "'His Knife and Hands Bloody': Sweeney Todd's Journey from Page to Stage – Melodrama, Adaptation and the Original 1847 Manuscript," *Journal of Adaptation in Film & Performance* 8 (2015a), https://doi.org/10.1386/jafp.8.3.233_1.
11. All subsequent page references are from this edition, reprinted in Weltman's publication, and are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.
12. See Weltman for a reprint of the original playbill, stored in the British Library (25–27).
13. All subsequent page references are from this edition and are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.
14. Erle's recollections currently form the main contemporary account available for the nineteenth-century production. The exact date of the show he witnessed is unspecified, as he only states that his memoirs were "written a long time ago" (p. 19). But it is possible to ascertain that he saw a show after the initial repertoires, as he names a different actor who played Todd to the one on the original 1847 playbill (p. 39), and clearly before the 1883 version was printed. In addition to Erle, there is a very brief mention of the original run in the *Theatrical Times* (March 13, 1847), as discussed by Weltman (p. 16).
15. The "vampire trap" was a contemporary theatrical term, derived from its first usage in Planché's *The Vampire; or, The Bride of the Isles* (1820) for the villain to suddenly appear and vanish from various angles of the stage.
16. See Weltman for dates on Dibdin Pitt's composition, submission and staging (p. 1).

17. All subsequent page references are from this edition and are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.
18. Similar reactions were seen in response to Thomas Russell Sullivan's melodrama, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1887–1888), and the plot corresponds with Mayer's discussion of the era's interest in the "double self." I discuss the play's horror in my article, "'Two and the Same': Jack the Ripper and The Melodramatic Stage Adaptation of *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*," *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 42.2 (2015b), <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748372716645114>.
19. For an overview of the music halls' growth in the later part of the century, see Jacky Bratton, "The Music Hall," in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*, ed. Kerry Powell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
20. See also Hand and Wilson's *Performing Grand-Guignol: Playing the Theatre of Horror* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2016) and *Grand-Guignol: The French Theatre of Horror* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2010).
21. There is some debate over the reasons behind the French Grand-Guignol's decline—see Hand and Wilson's discussion on factors including the rise of horror film and World War Two (*Grand-Guignol: The French Theatre of Horror*, pp. 23–25).
22. See Tim Auld, "The Turn of the Screw, at Almeida Theatre, review," *The Telegraph*, January 30, 2013, accessed July 25, 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-reviews/9838436/The-Turn-of-the-Screw-at-Almeida-Theatre-review.html>; and Susannah Clapp, "The Haunting of Hill House review: A spectre in search of a feast," *The Guardian*, December 20, 2015, accessed July 25, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/dec/20/haunting-of-hill-house-liverpool-playhouse-observer-review>.
23. See Anon., "Hammer House of Horror – Live," *Hammer* website, July 13, 2017, accessed July 16, 2017, <http://www.hammerfilms.com/hammer-house-of-horror-live>.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anon. 1821. Thoughts on the Present Political Aspect of the Times. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 8 (47), February.
- . 1823a. English Opera-House. *The Times*, July 29.
- . 1823b. Theatre: English Opera. *London Morning Post*, July 29.
- . 1847a. Newgate. *Morning Chronicle*, 24107. January 28.
- . 1847b. Police Intelligence. *Morning Post*, 22828. February 2.
- . 1847c. Police – Yesterday. *Daily News*, 214. February 4.
- . 1871a. Lyceum Theatre. *The Times*, 27323. November 28.
- . 1871b. Lyceum Theatre. *The Era*, 1732. December 3.
- . 2007. *The String of Pearls. A Romance* (1846–7). In *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street: The Original Novel*, ed. Robert L. Mack, 3–282. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Backscheider, Paula R. 1993. *Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Booth, Michael R. 1965. *English Melodrama*. London: Jenkins.

- Bratton, Jacky. 2004. The Music Hall. In *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*, ed. Kerry Powell, 164–182. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Buckley, Matthew S. 2014. The Formation of Melodrama. In *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre 1737–1832*, ed. Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor, 457–475. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cox, Jeffrey N., ed. 1992. *Seven Gothic Dramas, 1789–1825*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Crone, Rosalind. 2012. *Violent Victorians: Popular Entertainment in Nineteenth-Century London*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Dibdin Pitt, George. 2011. *The String of Pearls, or The Fiend of Fleet Street* (1847). In *The String of Pearls, or The Fiend of Fleet Street (the Original Sweeney Todd Melodrama)*, ed. Sharon Aronofsky Weltman, with an Afterword by Jim Davis. *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 38: 29–85.
- Erle, Thomas W. 1862. *Letters from a Theatrical Scene-Painter (Second Series)*. London: J. Chisman.
- Forry, Steven Earl, ed. 1990. *Hideous Progenies: Dramatizations of Frankenstein from Mary Shelley to the Present*. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press.
- Hand, Richard J., and Michael Wilson. 2007. *London's Grand Guignol and the Theatre of Horror*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.
- . 2010. *Grand-Guignol: The French Theatre of Horror*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.
- . 2016. *Performing Grand-Guignol: Playing the Theatre of Horror*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.
- Hoeverler, Diane Long. 2010. *Gothic Riffs: Secularizing the Uncanny in the European Imaginary, 1780–1820*. Ohio: Ohio State University Press.
- . 2016. Nineteenth-Century Dramatic Adaptations of *Frankenstein*. In *The Cambridge Companion to Frankenstein*, ed. Andrew Smith, 175–189. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jones, David J. 2011. *Gothic Machine: Textualities, Pre-Cinematic Media and Film in Popular Visual Culture, 1670–1910*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Lewis, Leopold Davis. 1872. *The Bells: A Drama in Three Acts (Adapted from "The Polish Jew," A Dramatic Study, by M.M. Erckmann-Chatrion)*. London; New York: Samuel French and Son.
- Mayer, David. 2004. *The Bells: A Case Study; A 'Bare-Ribbed Skeleton in a Chest'*. In *The Cambridge History of British Theatre: Volume Two, 1660 to 1895*, ed. Joseph Donohue, 388–404. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Moody, Jane. 2000. *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770–1840*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Peake, Richard Brinsley. 1990. *Presumption; or, The Fate of Frankenstein* (London: John Dicks (no. 431), c.1865). In *Hideous Progenies: Dramatizations of Frankenstein from Mary Shelley to the Present*, ed. Steven Earl Forry, 135–160. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press.
- Radcliffe, Ann. 1826. On the Supernatural in Poetry. *New Monthly Magazine* 16: 145–152.
- Saggini, Francesca. 2015. *The Gothic Novel and the Stage: Romantic Appropriations*. London: Pickering and Chatto.

- Saglia, Diego. 2014. 'A Portion of the Name': Stage Adaptations of Radcliffe's Fiction, 1794–1806. In *Ann Radcliffe, Romanticism and the Gothic*, ed. Dale Townshend and Angela Wright, 219–236. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shapiro, Anne Dhu. 1991. Nineteenth-Century Melodrama: From *A Tale of Mystery* to *Monte Cristo*. *Harvard Library Bulletin* 2: 54–73.
- Shelley, Mary. 1980. Letter from Mary Shelley to Leigh Hunt, September 9, 1823. In *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: Volume I, "A Part of the Elect"*, ed. Betty T. Bennett, 377–383. Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Shepherd, Simon. 1994. Pauses of Mutual Agitation. In *Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen*, ed. Jacky Bratton, Jim Cook, and Christine Gledhill, 25–37. London: British Film Institute.
- Taylor, George. 1989. *Players and Performances in the Victorian Theatre*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Weltman, Sharon Aronofsky, ed. 2011. Introduction: George Dibdin Pitt's 1847 *Sweeney Todd*. In *The String of Pearls, or The Fiend of Fleet Street (the Original Sweeney Todd Melodrama)*. *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 38: 1–22.
- Winter, Sarah A. 2014. *Gothic Stages: The Rise and Fall of English Melodrama 1790–1890*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Northumbria University.
- . 2015a. 'His Knife and Hands Bloody': Sweeney Todd's Journey from Page to Stage – Melodrama, Adaptation and the Original 1847 Manuscript. *Journal of Adaptation in Film & Performance* 8: 233–247. https://doi.org/10.1386/jafp.8.3.233_1.
- . 2015b. 'Two and the Same': Jack the Ripper and the Melodramatic Stage Adaptation of *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 42 (2): 174–194. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748372716645114>.
- Wisker, Gina. 2005. *Horror Fiction: An Introduction*. New York; London: Continuum.
- Worrall, David. 2008. The Political Culture of Gothic Drama. In *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter, 94–106. Oxford: Blackwell.



Horror in Gothic Chapbooks

Franz J. Potter

A most curious and forgotten descendent of the Gothic novel is the simple chapbook. Gothic chapbooks (occasionally referred to as a “bluebook” or “shilling shocker”) were a series of small pamphlets, covered in blue wrappings distinguished by their horrific content and sensational extremes. While Gothic novels, in part, sought to mediate between the polite and the terrifying, the chapbook exploited the readers’ predilection for horror by circumventing the measured terror of lengthier novels and offering the reader instantaneous horrors by extricating the most sensational episodes and rendering them even more shocking. By blurring, if not erasing, that line between terror and horror, which Ann Radcliffe viewed as “so far opposite that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes and nearly annihilates them,” these tales opened the flood gates and thrust horror all at once upon the type of reader who had neither the time nor the taste for a leisurely Gothic experience (Radcliffe 1826, p. 149).

As “[w]ild, improbable, fantastic, cliché-ridden, and crudely composed,” Gothic chapbooks, Fred Frank argues, are “nevertheless a highly representative example of the cravings of the Gothic audience after 1800” (Frank 1987, p. 421). Indeed, the popularity of these short pamphlets cannot be understated: they were devoured by all readers seeking entertaining and moralistic tales of both terror and horror, despite the warning that “[t]hey are literary mushrooms, which only enjoy a precarious existence, therefore cannot afford a lasting source of either instruction or amusement” (Frank 1987, p. 199). As disreputable and straightforward as these shortened tales were, their appeal to the reader’s contradictory desires and impulses were stronger than the mea-

F. J. Potter (✉)
National University, Costa Mesa, CA, USA

sured management of terror and horror in longer novels. In imposing horror upon the reader, brevity was certainly the key component of the chapbook. This chapter examines the way in which the Gothic chapbook administered, utilized, and exploited horror to appeal to an increasingly diverse readership at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

RISE OF THE GOTHIC CHAPBOOK

While it is considered the bastard offspring of the novel, the Gothic chapbook has its roots in the periodicals. By the 1790s, Gothic stories were an established, distinct, and recognizable form of Gothic fiction in periodicals. Generally speaking, there are two species of Gothic short stories: tales and fragments. Each type contains an abbreviated form of the Gothic novel, including conventional motifs and characteristics. There is no difference between the two terms, except that of length, the tale being the longer of the two; consequently, the term “Gothic tale” applies equally to Gothic short stories, tales of terror, novelles, fragments, and serialized romances.

Gothic tales primarily appeared in periodicals such as *The Lady’s Magazine*; *The London Magazine*; *La Belle Assemblée, or Bell’s Court and Fashionable Magazine*; *The Lady’s Monthly Museum, or Polite Repository of Amusement and Instruction*; and *The Gleaner, or, Entertainment for the Fire-Side*, among innumerable others. Robert Mayo argues that “the Gothic short stories of the monthlies belong to this class of fiction, and while they undoubtedly tried to be blood-curdling they were usually careful not to violate decorum or to offend the moral sense,” and he views these polite didactic features as symptomatic of periodicals themselves (Mayo 1942, p. 448). In other words, while the Gothic tales in periodicals did utilize horror, it was always with considerable constraint as not to offend the sensibilities of their readers.

Considering the prominence of short Gothic tales in the 1790s, it is not unexpected that the first recognized Gothic chapbook is a collection of three popular tales simply titled *Gothic Stories* and published in Manchester by G. Nicholson in 1797. The collection includes one fragment, “Sir Bertrand” by Mrs. Barbauld, and two tales, “Sir Gawen” by Dr. Nathan Drake, which originally appeared in *The Speculator* (1790), and “Edwin,” from the *Universal Magazine*. The stories, all supernatural in nature, offer readers three different species of “gothic superstition” where mystery mingles more with horror than terror.

The success of Nicholson’s *Gothic Stories* encouraged booksellers and publishers Simon Fisher and Thomas Hurst to issue a new edition of *Gothic Stories* in 1799. This edition not only recycled the recognizable title but contains similar stories, including *Sir Bertrand’s adventures in a ruinous castle* (though no longer a fragment) as well as *The Story of Fitzalan* from the *Monthly Visitor* (1797); *The Adventure James III of Scotland had with the weird sisters, in the dreadful wood of Birnam, A Scottish Tale*, from Agnes Musgrave’s *Edmund of the Forest* (1797); *The story of Raymond Castle* by Mr. Bacon, from the *Monthly Cabinet* (1797); *The Ruin of the House of Albert* from Everhard Ryan’s *Reliques*

of *Genius* (1777); and *Mary*, a fragment, from the *Monthly Cabinet*. This collection again utilizes horror elements more abundantly than their terror counterparts. The Fisher/Hurst *Gothic Stories* was so successful that it was reprinted in 1799, 1800, 1801, and 1804.

The allure of serialized Gothic tales was, in part, not only their abundance, but due to their simple plots and a rapid sequence of terror and horror. The limited narrative space required the author to divest superfluous descriptions and tedious inset tales and to focus on a straightforward narrative. Mysteries, which were slowly developed in novels, were transformed to a quick succession of terrifying events that carried the plot to its dreadful conclusion with remarkable swiftness. While the format of serialized tales naturally fit the 24–72-page chapbooks, it was yet to be seen if longer Gothic novels could make the transition.

The first Gothic chapbook redacted from a novel appeared in 1798. The luridly titled *The Castle of Lindenberg; or, The History of Raymond and Agnes; with the Story of the Bleeding Nun: and the Method by which the Wandering Jew quieted the Nuns' Troubled Spirit* was a redacted version of Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) and published by Fisher and Hurst. This edition, more of a novella, which Lewis may have authorized as his name, appeared on the title page, ran at 148 pages and preserved the most horrific and salacious parts of the novel. By extracting the Raymond/Agnes/Bleeding Nun tale and omitting the narrative of Ambrosio/Antonia/Rosario, Fisher and Hurst were, in part, able to capitalize on the continuing controversy surrounding the immorality of the novel (the chapbook appears as Lewis is censoring his third edition), but they shifted attention from the “immoral” Ambrosio narrative by focusing on the horrors of the bleeding nun. A second edition, issued the following year, was further reduced to 98 pages, and, by 1820, the entire horrific narrative could fit into a mere 24 pages.

The Castle of Lindenberg; or, The History of Raymond and Agnes redaction is significant as it provides an insight into attempts to simplify a complex narrative, while allowing the supernatural to operate without fear of violating decorum or offending the moral sense of its readers. *The Monk* continued to be a popular text of interest to both authors and publishers. In 1803, publisher Thomas Tegg issued two adaptations of the novel. One titled *Almagro and Claude; or, Monastic Murder Exemplified in the Dreadful doom of an Unfortunate Nun* focuses on the Raymond/Agnes/Bleeding Nun narrative, while *Father Innocent, Abbot of the Capuchins; or, the Crimes of Cloisters* selectively concentrates on the most horrific aspects of the Ambrosio and Matilda affair, complete with the sexual damnation of the monk to heighten the readers' shock.

The initial success of chapbooks encouraged other publishers to enter the Gothic marketplace. Between 1797 and 1801, a total of 23 Gothic chapbooks were published, and, in 1802 alone, a total of 28 chapbooks appeared in circulating libraries. The reason for the dramatic increase in titles, in part, was the establishment of *The Marvellous Magazine and Compendium of Prodigies*, a monthly series of chapbooks published between 1802 and 1804, which were then collected and published in volumes.

HORROR: THE ORDER OF THE DAY

In order to distinguish itself from the increasing number of publications, the successful Gothic chapbook had to stand out from the crowd. With relatively few marketing options, chapbooks frequently employed horror to sell tales. Perhaps the most important selling point is the title. The title not only informs the reader of the subject of the tale but also just how sensational it will be. The title was often the only preview the reader had at a circulating library. Patrons routinely selected a book or chapbook based solely on the alluring title from a large catalog. Following the tradition of Gothic novels, chapbooks utilize the double barrel title, which reveals the love interest, the location, or the horrible elements found within its pages. Thus, we have titles such as *The Cavern of Horrors; or, the Miseries of Miranda, A Neapolitan Tale* (1803); *The Horrors of the Secluded Castle; or, Virtue Triumphant* (1807); *The Mysterious Bride; or, the Statue Spectre* (1800); *Demon of Venice. A Romance* (1810); and *The Midnight Groan; or, the Spectre of the Chapel, involving an exposure of the horrible secrets of the nocturnal assembly. A Gothic Romance* (1808). Often, the more horrific and sensational, the more successful title.

Frontispieces, similarly, offer readers an insight into the chapbook. These illustrations provide a visual depiction of the horrors that await them. An artist, working closely with the publisher, would illustrate the most sensational scene from the tale, usually involving either a supernatural or violent event. The frontispiece of *The Black Valley; or, The Castle of Rosenberg* (1803), for instance, shows the heroine Amelia fainting into the arms of her women, as a murderer places the bloody head of her lover, Lindorf, at her feet, while a priest passively looks on. Although the head turns out to be wax, the reader is reasonably assured by the illustration of the nature of the Gothic tale. If discerning readers were uncertain about a particular title, then the illustration could confirm if the story was sufficiently horrifying.

The frontispiece was an engraving, most commonly wood or copper, which was used repeatedly on various publications until it was worn out and then it was modified for a different illustration. Ann Lemoine, in particular, pioneered the use of copperplates in chapbooks early in her career when she formed an association with a copperplate printer, Thomas Maiden, and according to Roy White, “used this cutting-edge technology for her 1802 chapbook, *The Black Forest; or, The Cavern of Horrors*, which was available with a standard black and white frontispiece for four pence or, for two pence more, with color” (White 2007, p. 63). If the title of Lemoine’s chapbook did not convince the reader of the horrific contents, then the frontispiece which depicts a skeleton waving a sword, would be sufficient evidence.

The publishers of Gothic chapbooks did not fail to recognize the commercial value of the captivating title page, either. The potential customer, unconvinced by the lurid frontispiece that the story is sensational enough, would reassure readers that their selection is, indeed, horrifying. Title pages are often adorned with literary quotes that preview the nature of the tale, usually from

Shakespeare. Isaac Crookenden's *The Mysterious Murder; or, the Usurper of Naples* (1808), for instance, includes the following epitaph from *Macbeth*: "What need I fear thee? and yet I'll make Assurance/Double sure: he shall not live! that I may tell/Pale-hearted Fear it lies, and sleep in spite of Thunders!" Some title pages even go so far as to offer a complete summary of the entire tale: *The Midnight Assassin; or, Confessions of the Monk Rinaldi; containing a Complete History of his Diabolical Machinations, and Unparalleled Ferocity. Together with a Circumstantial Account of that Scourge of Mankind the Inquisition; with the Manner of Bringing to Trial those Unfortunate Beings who are at its Disposal*. In the end, the reader is suitably assured that the monastic shocker will undoubtedly inflict horror for horror's sake.

Most notably, a successful Gothic chapbook delivers readers predictable and recognizable motifs and conventions: convents, diabolical monks, dangerous nuns, haunted castles, and specters. In other words, readers are offered a banquet of horrors. The formulaic nature of the Gothic and the limited page numbers allow the chapbook narrative to narrow its focus to relatively few familiar locations of horror with a keener eye.

In the case of the anonymous "Bleeding Nun of St. Catherine's" tale found in *Romances and Gothic Tales* (1801), Anna, who had fled to the Convent of St. Catherine, is compelled to take the veil to escape her father's tyranny and a forced marriage. Anna, whose Gothic forerunner is Agnes in *The Monk*, is discovered to be with child, having secretly married a stranger who seduced her. The brevity of the narrative contributes to the sense of danger the reader feels. In the meantime, a neighboring Baron accuses the order of breaking the vow of celibacy in an effort to appropriate the convent. The Lady Abbess, in an attempt to hide Anna's "crime" from the Baron's detection, sentences the nun to death:

At the hour of midnight they dragged the miserable victim from her bed, and deep in the horrific dungeons of the prison plunged the distracted nun!—Groans, sighs, and shrieks, alternately rung echoing round the rugged walls: the torturing horrors of famine awaited the unfortunate nun; no pity alleviated her misery; and in the centre of the place stood the coffin destined for her; whilst round the walls and floor, in all directions, were strewed the ghastly ensigns of woe and torment ... Two days of lingering sufferings had passed, and the third was nearly closed. Shut from life, and light, and every means of existence, the pangs of hunger seized the frantic sufferer, and the perils of premature childbirth writhed her anguished frame. Shrieks of despair rang through the building, and echoed to the vault of heaven. Hark! again that soul-appalling cry!—Inhuman fiends, is mercy dead within you!—Is there no touch of pity in your obdurate souls!—And thou too, remorseless betrayer of trusting innocence, hear ye not yon soul-appalling cry of her thy fatal love has destroyed?—Hark! again she calls on thy un pitying name; and now, in the bitterness of her soul's sufferings, she curses thee, and imprecates heaven's just vengeance on thy perjured head! Heaven hears the awful appeal—it will avenge thee, suffering Anna! Now sink to death appeased.—Again the shriek—Sure it is her last! The holy sisterhood, appalled, fly wildly from the

dreadful tower; but vainly supplicate the mercy of their superiors for its dying inmate. Nature is exhausted, and hark, again the groans grow fainter! Short breathed murmurs proclaim the welcome dissolution of life. The soul, though confined with the suffering frame within the massy bars of her prison, at length has built its bonds—It mounts from death, and in a moment is freed for ever. (Anonymous 2009, pp. 54–55)

Finally, the haughty Baron prevails with the dissolution of the entire order, wherewith he takes possession of the edifice.

The haunting description of Anna's fate, in part, is used to justify the appearance of the "bloody nun" in splendid horror:

...the ghost of Anna is seen every night, walking down the great long aisles of the church up to the altar, where it kneels till the clock strikes twelve, when it goes out of the great doors, which fly open at its approach, and walks to the great south tower, where it utters three loud shrieks; when the old wicked Baron's ghost is forced to come, as soon as these are heard; and Anna drives him with a fire-band in one hand, and a dead child in the other, all over the ruins, till they come to the chamber where the Baron used to sleep after he treacherously got possession of the abbey. Dismal yells, and dying groans are then heard to echo through all the apartments, and blazing lights thrown about the great north bed-chamber, till the great turret clock, that has never for many a weary long year been touched by mortal hands, tolls heavily two, and sometimes three strokes upon the bell. (Anonymous 2009, p. 45)

As in the majority of Monastic chapbooks, the action is complete, and, when evil has been exposed, justice is swift. The plot is straightforward with the moral of righteous diligence reinforced in the closing lines.

In Sarah Wilkinson's *The Midnight Embrace in the Halls of Werdendorff* (1812), the specter of Josephine seeks not only revenge but also vengeance. The haughty Albert of Werdendorff had seduced the innocent and parentless Josephine, but on the eve of his wedding, with the encouragement of his bride-to-be, Guimilda, he poisons the young woman. As the wedding commences,

...a tremendous storm suddenly shook the battlements of the castle: thunder's loud peals burst on the ancient walls; while the lightning's pointed glare flashed with appalling repetition through the painted casement. Dim burnt the numberless tapers; when Josephine's deathlike form glided from the portal, and, with solemn pace, proceeded along the hall to the spot where Lord Albert stood. Pale was her face; and her features seemed to retain the convulsive marks of the horrid death to which Guimilda had revengefully consigned her. Clad in the habiliments of the grave, her appearance was awe-inspiring ... With these words Josephine wound her arms around his trembling form. "I am come from the confines of the dead," said she, "to make thee fulfil thy parting promise." She dragged him by a force he could not resist to her breast: she pressed her clammy lips to his; and held him fast in her noisome icy embrace.

At length the horrific spectre released him from her grasp. He started back in breathless agony, and sank senseless on the floor. (Wilkinson 2009b, pp. 300–301)

Here the screw of supernatural horror is hastily tightened, never allowing the reader time for a breath or skeptical musings. The violent supernatural fate of the seducer is justified, leaving the reader sufficiently edified and horrified.

The success of Gothic chapbooks is ultimately hinged on their ability to exploit readers' predilection for the supernatural, violence, terror, and horror. Horror, sensibility, and all the paraphernalia that accompany the supernatural are crammed into the compressed Gothic for readers who are delighted in shocks and shudders. From sensational titles to lurid illustrations, horror, in its many manifestations, was always the most effective marketing tool.

ADDING HORROR UPON HORROR

While conventional Gothic horrors were all that were required to satisfy the clamoring masses of eager readers seeking the thrill of fear, the most popular chapbooks contain an even more subtle mode: domestic horror. In Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1818), it is Catherine Morland who embodies the typical reader pursuing her own Gothic adventures while ignoring the risks and dangers around her. Catherine's desire to escape reality, through the reading of horrors that are beyond the realm of possibility, is ultimately complicated by the abundance of horrors that lurk in her domestic space. In Gothic chapbooks, these domestic horrors, while often overpowered by the more conventional horrors such as a haunted castle or specters, nevertheless exist side by side. Indeed, some Gothic chapbooks go so far as to underscore domestic horror of parental tyranny, forced marriage, and rape.

Gothic novelist and chapbook writer Sarah Wilkinson, in particular, reinforces that it is the horrors of domestic life that are more dangerous than any supernatural threat. In *The Convent of St. Ursula* (1808), Magdalena's father, the Count di Verona, having lost her inheritance at the gaming table, agreed to settle his debt with Count Ottagro by offering the hand of his daughter. Horrified by her father's decision, she entreats:

"Ah, no, my father, some sinister design lurks beneath his professions, believe them not, let us fly this place and seek some other means to recruit our finances; rather would I toil for my daily bread, than become his countess." "You have said enough, Magdalena, now hear my resolutions. I will not be pointed at as the libertine wretch who has spent his child's property; these pistols (taking a small pair from his pocket) shall rid me of existence. Out of the wreck of my fortune, more than an independence can be gathered for you? and you may exult over the ashes of a father you refused to save." He rushed from the chamber, and Magdalena fainted. On her recovery, she, with tottering steps, sought the count's apartment. He sat with folded arms, the pistols lay before him on the table, and so deeply did his thoughts appear employed, that he noticed not her entrance, till she addressed him and besought him to speak to her. "Is there no way left." said

she, “but my marriage with the hated count?” “None but my death,” said he, impressively, “you are worse than an assassin; your folly drives me to an act for which there is no redemption—suicide.” The count continued to work so artfully on Magdalena’s feelings, that, in a fatal moment, she consented to all he asked, investing him with the power to acquaint Ottagro that she sanctioned his addresses, if he would consent to receive a hand unaccompanied by affection. (Wilkinson 2009a, pp. 245–246)

Subjected to parental tyranny and forced to marry against her will, Magdalena escapes to a convent after she discovers Count Ottagro’s first wife confined in a dungeon beneath the castle. While the horrors of parental tyranny and forced marriages are common occurrence in Gothic novels and chapbooks, it is nevertheless unsettling considering that these particular horrors had a root in contemporary society. While most readers would never live in a castle or discover an imprisoned woman, they were, however, still subject to parental authority and the possibility of a marriage for money rather than love. For Wilkinson, life in a loveless marriage was the actual horror endured by these heroines. Where most chapbooks simplified the plot to intensify the terrors associated with the domestic, Wilkinson magnified those horrors, thereby, reinforcing the brutality that can take place in that space.

Similarly, threat of rape at the hands of a scorned suitor, a relative, or a debauched nobleman is not just a terrifying but also a constant threat, where the sexual norms still justified a man’s depraved behavior. For Wilkinson, the threat of rape is so frequent that it often fails to horrify the reader. In an effort to reposition the spotlight on this brutal act, she endeavors to highlight the villain’s attitudes toward women rather than focusing on the event itself. In *The Priory of St. Clair*, for example, Wilkinson describes a man that, while at home in a Gothic tale, would be found at a contemporary ball or party. “Lewis Chabot, Count de Valve, was a gay extravagant young nobleman. He loved the fair sex, but not in the manner they deserved to be loved, for he regarded them merely as lovely beings created for no other purpose than to soothe the cares of men, attend on them, and administer to their sensual pleasures” (Wilkinson 2009c, p. 279). For Wilkinson, misogyny is a dreadful horror that is not just confined to tales, but also presents a real danger.

In the end, the chapbook, with all of its Gothic horrors, slipped into obscurity by 1835, becoming a literary ghost. Short tales of terror and horror continued in magazines, but the once popular hand-stitched pamphlet, with its gaudy frontispiece and lurid title, has all but disappeared from literary history. As Fred Frank concludes, “[h]orror in all of the shilling shockers is rapid, crude, [and] unadorned”; nevertheless these tales offer a unique insight into the evolution of terror and horror in the early nineteenth century (Frank 1987, p. 412).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anonymous. 2009. Romances and Gothic Tales. In *Literary Mushrooms: Tales of Terror and Horror from the Gothic Chapbooks, 1800–1830*, ed. Franz Potter, 39–85. Crestline: Zittaw Press.
- Frank, Frederick. 1987. *The First Gothics: A Critical Guide to the English Gothic Novel*. New York: Garland Publishing Inc.
- Mayo, Robert. 1942. The Gothic Short Story in the Magazines. *The Modern Language Review* 37 (4): 448–454.
- Radcliffe, Ann. 1826. On the Supernatural in Poetry by the Late Mrs. Radcliffe. *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* 16 (1): 145–152.
- White, Roy. 2007. *How the Wind Sits; or, The History of Henry and Ann Lemoine, Chapbook Writers and Publishers of the Late Eighteenth Century*. MA thesis, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.
- Wilkinson, Sarah. 2009a. The Convent of St. Ursula. In *Literary Mushrooms: Tales of Terror and Horror from the Gothic Chapbooks, 1800–1830*, ed. Franz Potter, 231–263. Crestline: Zittaw Press.
- . 2009b. The Midnight Embrace in the Halls of Werdendorff. In *Literary Mushrooms: Tales of Terror and Horror from the Gothic Chapbooks, 1800–1830*, ed. Franz Potter, 295–301. Crestline: Zittaw Press.
- . 2009c. Priory of St. Clair. In *Literary Mushrooms: Tales of Terror and Horror from the Gothic Chapbooks, 1800–1830*, ed. Franz Potter, 279–294. Crestline: Zittaw Press.



“We Stare and Tremble”: Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Horror Novels

Natalie Neill

In *Northanger Abbey*, when Isabella Thorpe gives Catherine Morland a list of novels to read, Catherine asks her friend excitedly, “[A]re they all horrid, are you sure they are all horrid?” (Austen 2002, p. 62). Jane Austen’s heroine was not alone in her enthusiasm for “horrid” books. Novels of horror and suspense were exceedingly popular with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century reading audiences. These novels also attracted the most criticism and parody during a period when all novels were regarded with a degree of suspicion. As Michael Gamer notes, any history of horror must take into account this genre’s “cultural stigma” and perceived low literary value (2000, p. 10). The first horror novels were decried for aesthetic, moral, and even political reasons. A great deal of the fear and revulsion that horror novels generated came from moralists and conservative critics. In this chapter, I discuss the history and fraught reception of the horror novel from the mid-eighteenth century to the late Victorian period. I provide an overview of some of the most influential early examples of the genre in order to show how the horror novel evolved as a result of the novelists’ imitation and reworking of earlier texts. I argue, moreover, that the twin forces of public approbation and critical scorn defined the early horror novel and drove its development. Throughout the chapter, I explore the mixed responses that horror elicits within individual readers and among groups of readers. I explain horror’s popular appeal as well as the negative reactions to the genre; in particular, I suggest that the horror novel has always attracted interest and fear because of its tendency to dramatize real social conditions and anxieties.

N. Neill (✉)
York University, Toronto, ON, Canada

As its name suggests, horror literature is usually defined not through a clear set of conventions but rather by the chief and most obvious reaction it evokes in the reader, namely: “the thrill of horror and surprise” (Radcliffe 2000, p. 168). In her essay, “On the Supernatural in Poetry” (1826), Romantic novelist Ann Radcliffe argues that horror “contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates [the faculties],” but although the effect is “sudden and strong, [it] is also transient” (p. 168). The readerly effect of horror may be fleeting, but, as a novelistic genre, horror has remarkable longevity. Most accounts of the horror novel identify Horace Walpole as its originator. Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) is a “Gothic” tale (i.e., a medieval one) about a tyrant named Manfred, the long-suffering ladies in his family (whom he abuses as he tries to retain his ill-gotten power), an ancient prophecy, and avenging ghosts. Although the story revolves around the actions of the villainous Manfred, Walpole’s title suggests that the main character of the book may be the Gothic castle itself. With its labyrinthine corridors, secret chambers, trap doors, haunted portrait galleries, and resident animated skeleton, the castle set a blueprint for countless haunted keeps in later horror novels. In addition to its prototypical setting, *The Castle of Otranto* features spectral visitations, prophetic dreams, sexual violence, and murder. Walpole claimed the supernatural and the irrational as his subject matter and thus engaged with the very ideas that the Enlightenment rationalist philosophies of his day denied. His story allowed readers to confront dark and barbarous topics from a safe, aesthetic distance. This is just one reason why Walpole’s curious medieval tale proved so popular (and why horror novels continue to attract readers today).

As Deborah Russell has recently shown, modern scholars of horror fiction are merely following the lead of Walpole’s contemporaries in regarding *The Castle of Otranto* as the “starting point” of the genre (2016, p. 55). In the late 1790s, critic T. J. Mathias bemoaned the fact that ghostly horrors loaded the shelves of “every novel shop,” and he disparagingly referred to such books as *Otranto*’s “spawn” (as cited in Russell 2016, p. 55). Yet, no work springs out of a literary vacuum, and Walpole’s tale of Gothic supernaturalism owes debts to many earlier texts and traditions. For example, the supernatural machinery, which includes the enchanted armor of a giant specter, is adapted from Chivalric romances. The ghost scenes recall those in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. Walpole also combined elements from two popular eighteenth-century novelistic genres: the novel of sensibility and the criminal biography. The Gothic villain and the damsels in distress in Walpole’s book resemble the wicked rakes and wronged women found in the popular sentimental novels of the day. Manfred also bears a resemblance to the criminal antiheroes of such rogue narratives as Tobias Smollett’s *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753). Moreover, *The Castle of Otranto* betrays the influence of an early eighteenth-century school of poetry known as the Graveyard School—so called because the poems were gloomy meditations on death.

Walpole deliberately situated his novel in relation to the literature of his day. In particular, his novel participates in the period’s revival of interest in medieval

literature. In penning his melodramatic Gothic tale, Walpole rejected the decorum that marked the literary productions of the Neoclassical writers. Importantly, Walpole’s book is also a reaction against the realism that characterized the early English novels. Originally, Walpole tried to pass off his work as a true story obtained from an authentic twelfth-century manuscript, but in the preface of the second edition, he acknowledged the hoax and defended his book by offering a strong defense of imaginative literature. In writing his mock medieval romance, Walpole’s professed goal was to unleash the “resources of fancy,” which had been “dammed up” by novelists’ too “strict adherence to common life” (Walpole 2014b, p. 9). Thus, from its earliest period, the horror novel was defined as the dark “other” to the realist novel.

Setting a pattern for later critical responses to horror fiction, one early review of *The Castle of Otranto* evinced concern about the moral effect that Walpole’s marvelous tale would have on the reading public. The reviewer exclaimed, “It is, indeed, more than strange, that an Author, of a refined and polished genius, should be an advocate for re-establishing the barbarous superstitions of Gothic devilism!” (Review of *The Castle of Otranto* 1765, p. 394). Yet, other early readers commented on the playfulness of Walpole’s book, citing the buffoonish castle servants and the wildly improbable plot events. To be sure, the exaggerated supernatural elements in *The Castle of Otranto* are ludicrous. For example, at the beginning of the book, Manfred’s only son is crushed to death beneath a huge helmet, the property of the gigantic ghost. The supposed “horror of the spectacle” is undercut by the sheer absurdity of the situation (Walpole 2014a, p. 18). Novelist Clara Reeve observed that the excesses and improbabilities of *The Castle of Otranto* tended to “excite laughter” rather than inspire fear (1780, p. vii). One of Walpole’s first imitators, Reeve wrote her own “Gothic Story,” *The Old English Baron*, in 1778. In her preface, Reeve described the novel as “the literary offspring of *The Castle of Otranto*” (p. iii). However, as James Watt has argued, Reeve’s main objective in imitating Walpole’s book was to “exorcise” the Gothic novel of any trace of “frivolity” (Watt 1999, p. 60). Reeve’s medieval work, like Walpole’s, is about usurpation, horror, and a haunted castle; yet, Reeve’s work is more serious than Walpole’s is and more judicious in its treatment of the supernatural. In a letter written to a friend in the year that *The Old English Baron* was published, Walpole observes that by copying his novel, but largely “[stripping it] of the marvellous,” Reeve had created “the most insipid dull nothing you ever saw. It certainly does not make one laugh, for what makes one doze, seldom makes one merry” (Walpole 1937, p. 110). The comment suggests that the first horror novel may well have been written with the intent to amuse, rather than horrify, readers.

Walpole’s book inspired many imitators who sought to capitalize on his work’s popularity with readers, such that by the end of the century, horror novels were pervasive. The Marquis de Sade argued in “Reflections on the Novel” (1800) that such novels were the “inevitable fruit of the revolutionary shocks” that hit Europe in the late eighteenth century (Sade 1966, p. 109). Sade suggested that real-life horrors had desensitized the reading public, and

so novelists accordingly increased the horrors in their works to achieve a response. In a period of burgeoning print culture, the novel of supernatural horror and suspense was arguably the first mass-market genre. The genre was given various names, including “the *terrible* school,” “terrorist novel writing,” and “hobgoblin-romance” (Clery 1995, p. 148). Even as it was becoming established, this kind of writing was targeted by reviewers and parodists for its conventionality. Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote supernatural ballads that belong to the tradition of horror writing, yet he derided the horror novels of his day as formulaic. Describing the new fashion for novels of “the horrible and the preternatural” in 1797, he declared, “the public will learn, by the multitude of the manufacturers, with how little expense of thought or imagination this species of composition is manufactured” (Coleridge 1797, p. 194). Coleridge reviewed Gothic novels by Matthew Lewis, Ann Radcliffe, and Mary Robinson for the *Critical Review*. In a private letter, he remarked:

I am almost weary of the Terrible [...]—I have been lately reviewing the Monk, the Italian, Hubert de Servac & c & c—in all of which dungeons, and old castles, & solitary Houses by the Sea Side, & Caverns, & Woods, & extraordinary characters, & all the tribe of Horror & Mystery, have crowded on me—even to surfeiting. (Coleridge 1956, p. 318)

Coleridge’s letter points to a paradox that still exists within horror writing: namely, the genre focuses on the extraordinary and the supernatural, yet it tends to shrink into cliché and formula. The title of one 1798 parody, F. C. Patrick’s *More Ghosts!*, sums up neatly the ubiquity and predictability of supernatural horror fiction in the 1790s.

Despite the criticisms Coleridge offered, he regarded the novels that he reviewed as being more innovative than the common run of “Horror & Mystery” novels, many of which would have been published by William Lane’s Minerva Press, a major purveyor of horror fiction in Britain in the Romantic period. Indeed, six of the seven “horrid” novels in Isabella Thorpe’s list were published by Minerva.¹ Dorothy Blakey has suggested that critics used “Minerva” as a “convenient epithet of contempt” (1996, p. 1). Minerva publications were dismissed as poorly written, derivative commercial fictions. Minerva was also tainted by its association with German stories of “Illuminati, international conspiracies, [...] occult mysteries, mysterious visions and horrifying deaths” (Bannet 2011, p. 139). It is noteworthy that most of the “horrids” listed in Austen’s parody are imitations or translations of German Schauerromane (“shudder novels”) or Rauberromane (“robber novels”). As Eve Tavor Bannet puts it, Lane shrewdly “[cashed] in on the rage” for German horror in Britain in this period (p. 139). Thomas Love Peacock made fun of this particular literary fad in his satire *Nightmare Abbey* (1818): one of the characters sleeps with a German Gothic book “under his pillow” and dreams of “ghastly confederates holding midnight conventions in subterranean caves” (1986, p. 47).

Remarkably, not all works written in a thrilling or supernatural vein were denigrated by critics. The most popular, but also the most ground-breaking and respected, practitioner of the genre in the 1790s was Ann Radcliffe, whose feminocentric novels include *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), and *The Italian* (1797). At a time when the usual sum paid for Minerva novels was £10–20, Radcliffe was paid £500 for the copyright of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (Norton 1999, p. 94). Radcliffe's approach was more original than that taken by the authors of the "horrids." Her novels feature female protagonists: realistically drawn persecuted heroines, through whose perspectives the narratives are focalized. The Radcliffean heroine is sensitive, susceptible to superstitious fears, and prey to the machinations of repressive, unscrupulous men. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Radcliffe's most popular novel, the heroine, Emily St. Aubert, is abducted by the villain, Montoni, and kept prisoner in the remote Gothic castle of Udolpho, where she is terrified by many supernatural appearances. Radcliffe builds upon Reeve's modifications to the genre, especially so far as the judicious treatment of the supernatural is concerned. Radcliffe was careful to provide natural explanations for each shadowy figure, strange sound, and alarming ghostly apparition. She specialized in "terror," or suspense, rather than horror per se. As she suggests in "On the Supernatural in Poetry," terror is an anticipatory anxiety over an uncertain threat, whereas horror is our response when the danger is explicit (2000, p. 149). Radcliffe's theories were informed by Edmund Burke's aesthetic treatise on the sublime (1757), in which Burke argued that obscurity contributes to the awe and terror one experiences when confronting sublime objects. Radcliffe cultivates uncertainty in her texts by limiting the reader's knowledge to what her vulnerable heroines know. She also creates a disorienting atmosphere through detailed descriptions of brooding Gothic edifices and the sublime natural environs in which they were set. Yet, ultimately, she asserts the realism of her work through her policy of including rational elucidations.

It is important to note that Reeve and Radcliffe had to manage critical prejudices against women, and this, in part, explains the changes they made to the genre that had descended from Walpole. Female novelists were expected to produce decorous works that conformed to notions of feminine respectability. By eschewing the excesses and sensationalism of German horror, Radcliffe won favor from the reviewers in the 1790s who considered realism to be the appropriate mode for the novel (Gamer 2000, p. 69). Radcliffe's virtuous heroines, and the lessons they learned about the dangers of overactive imagination, also satisfied reviewers who evaluated novels according to their capacity to provide moral instruction.² Yet, even as Radcliffe succeeded in obviating criticism in a male-dominated literary marketplace, she used the genre in which she worked, as it has often subsequently been used, to defamiliarize and comment on social issues and anxieties. Through stories of female persecution and male violence, Radcliffe offered serious reflections about gender relations. In her works, the fear-ridden Gothic castle comes to symbolize women's lack of freedom and power in the patriarchal world of late eighteenth-century Britain. Radcliffe was

concerned with female experiences, and so it is no wonder that Catherine Morland and many actual female readers of the day were so taken with her novels.

Radcliffean Gothic became a recognizable (and increasingly conventionalized) style of writing. Radcliffe's policy of explaining the supernatural was widely imitated and parodied. The device was used so often that it became hackneyed. The "rational" explanations provided for supernatural appearances regularly stretched belief. One example is found in the first American horror novel, Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland; or, The Transformation: An American Tale* (1798), a work that features a religious fanatic, murder, and death by spontaneous combustion. In *Wieland*, seemingly otherworldly, disembodied voices are revealed to have been produced by a ventriloquist. Bathetic resolutions are spoofed in many Romantic-period parodies of horror fiction. In one 1798 parody, for example, a skull with fiery eyes turns out to be no more than a hollow turnip with a candle in it (S. 1798, pp. 63–64). Similarly, at the end of *The Hero*, a French parody of English horror novels, the "ghosts" who torment the protagonist are revealed to be a group of students from a nearby military college, draped in sheets and powdered with flour (Bellin de la Liborlière 2011, p. 130).

Even as parodists mocked novels of horror and terror for their incredible plotlines, other critics worried about the novels' coordinates to reality. Walpole's fictional world of castles and giants is seemingly far removed from real life in eighteenth-century England, but late eighteenth-century horror writers began to close the gap between the fictional and the real. Reviewers condemned horror fiction for its lack of realism, but when novelists responded by increasing the realism, critics were not always pleased. In the same year that *The Mysteries of Udolpho* was published, another novel appeared that helped to usher in a period of intense conservative reaction to horror literature. The very title of William Godwin's controversial *Things as They Are; or the Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) announces the work's links to then present-day realities. A radical philosopher, Godwin strongly opposed monarchical government, aristocratic privilege, and institutional religion. In *Caleb Williams*, he narrativized the ideas that he had expressed in his treatise, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793). As Godwin freely admitted in the preface to *Caleb Williams*, he used popular fiction as a vehicle to disseminate radical democratic principles to the reading public (Godwin 2005, p. 3). His novel is about a poor man, the titular Caleb Williams, who sets out to expose his aristocratic master as a murderer and ends up being hunted down by him. The thrilling flight-and-pursuit structure of Godwin's work would be employed by his daughter, Mary Shelley, two decades later in her celebrated novel, *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus*. In *Caleb Williams*, the persecution plot is used to critique England's hierarchical social system and expose abuses of institutional authority. The book raised serious alarm among British critics because it showed that the popularity of horror literature could be exploited to smuggle incendiary ideas into the sitting rooms of the nation.

Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796)—a tale about a depraved priest, Ambrosio, whose crimes include the murder of his mother and the rape of his sister—also incited outrage among conservative critics. Lewis defined his approach to horror writing in opposition to Radcliffe’s. Lewis admired *The Mysteries of Udolpho* but found parts of it “uncommonly dull,” as he explained in a letter that recalls Walpole’s response to Reeve’s book (Lewis 1839, p. 123). Drawing inspiration from the German shudder novels, Lewis’s work brims with shocking and horrifying scenes, both natural and supernatural. Whereas Radcliffe had explained away supernatural appearances and avoided blood and gore in favor of unhurried descriptions of nature, Lewis’s book embraces the supernatural and relishes the grotesque. For example, in the book’s shocking final scene, a taloned demon (the instigator of Ambrosio’s sins) hurls the monk into an abyss, where his body is desecrated by insects and birds:

Myriads of insects [...] drank the blood that trickled from Ambrosio’s wounds; he had no power to drive them from him, and they fastened upon his sores, darted their stings into his body, covered him with their multitudes, and inflicted on him tortures the most exquisite and insupportable. The eagles of the rock tore his flesh piecemeal, and dug out his eye-balls with their crooked beaks. (Lewis 2004, p. 363)

Ambrosio survives in this deplorable state for days. At last, a fierce storm pummels him to death, and the swollen river carries away “the corse of the despairing monk” (p. 363).

This dreadful punishment was not enough to abate the fears of critics who worried that readers unable to separate fiction and fantasy would copy the bad behaviors of villainous characters. Fears about impressionable consumers of horror have proven incredibly durable: similar concerns are expressed even to this day, in debates about the negative influence of first-person shooter games and slasher films on adolescents. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these kinds of fears concentrated on the harmful effects of novels. As Jacqueline Pearson observes, “a vigorous contest ensued over mass literacy, and whether its effect would be the erosion of standards or the effective maintenance of social control” (1999, p. 192). *The Monk* became a focus for anti-novel sentiment. It was deprecated as a work of violent pornography. Mathias called for its suppression and argued that Lewis had committed an indictable offense in writing it (1808, p. 245). He declared heatedly, “Novels of this seductive and libidinous tendency excite disgust, fear, and horror” (p. 367). Most distressing to critics was the fact that Lewis had been elected to Parliament as a Whig member in the very year that his novel was published. That a government official could have written such a book suggested a dangerous decline in moral standards. Coleridge concluded his review of Lewis’s novel by remarking: “the author of the *Monk* signs himself a LEGISLATOR!—We stare and tremble” (Coleridge 1797, p. 198).

Critical pressure drove Lewis to self-censorship. In the fourth edition of *The Monk*, in 1798, the most provocative passages were omitted. It is worth noting, however, that the controversy that surrounded Lewis's novel increased the reading public's interest in the suppressed sections of the book. *The Monk's* notoriety was one of its chief selling points. This is demonstrated by the fact that, in advertising the 1798 expurgated version of the novel, Lewis's publisher took the opportunity to announce that remainder copies of the original uncensored edition were still available for purchase at an inflated price (Macdonald and Scherf 2004, p. 21). Moreover, chapbook adaptations and imitations of *The Monk* continued to feed the public appetite for Lewisian horrors. The most successful imitation was Charlotte Dacre's sensational *Zofloya; or the Moor* (1806), a work significant in the history of horror writing because the heroine, Victoria, a female analogue of Ambrosio, is a murderous nymphomaniac. *Zofloya* was especially shocking because it challenged notions of feminine propriety. Dacre defied the conventional, gendered notions of male villainy and female victimhood; she also challenged the expectations placed on female writers. One hostile reviewer accused her of having "maggots in the brain" (Review of *Zofloya* 1806, p. 634).

Writers like Dacre resisted the critics and pushed boundaries of good taste and morality (as horror writers are wont to do); yet, criticism and parody did have a clear impact on the way that horror writing evolved. Most significantly, the frequent complaints about the genre's lack of originality encouraged greater diversity in horror writing. Edward H. Jacobs argues that the horror and terror market in the late eighteenth century was driven by the "economics of genericism" (2000, p. 159). Writers were assured of a ready-made audience if they wrote within certain generic constraints. Publishers and circulating library owners also relied upon readers' familiarity with the genre to sell books. By the 1810s and 1820s, however, this strategy was becoming less viable because the fictional conventions had grown overly familiar. Consequently, writers began to move away from the medieval settings and superstitions that had typified most horror novels after Walpole's. Anticipating what Julian Wolfreys calls the "inward turn" of the Victorian horror novel, early nineteenth-century writers no longer consigned the horrors and terrors to the distant past; instead, writers brought the dangers closer to home by giving their stories more familiar, contemporary settings (2000, p. 31).

The most famous horror novel of the Romantic period, and perhaps of all time, is Shelley's 1818 novel about the mad scientist Victor Frankenstein, who creates a being by galvanizing body parts plundered from charnel houses. Shelley appropriates the flight-and-pursuit structure of *Caleb Williams* and updates the Promethean myth; yet, in other ways, her novel is radically innovative. In large part, this is because it, like *Caleb Williams*, is a highly topical work. It is set in the near-present day of Shelley's first readers and is informed by nineteenth-century theories about electricity. *Frankenstein* is quintessentially Romantic in its style and themes. The outcast creature embodies the disappointed hopes of the French Revolution; he is a figure for Romantic angst,

melancholy, and rebelliousness. Not surprisingly, *Frankenstein* struck a chord with Romantic readers. Within months of its publication, Thomas Love Peacock remarked that the book was "universally known and read" (2001, pp. 146–147). Two hundred years later, Shelley's horrifying warning tale is an entrenched feature of the popular imagination. *Frankenstein* stages Romantic-period anxieties, but its theme of scientific overreaching continues to resonate. The book at once inaugurated the monster novel and probed the theme of the "monster within," which would become a major preoccupation of Victorian horror novelists. Shelley's novel urges the reader to ask who the real monster is, Frankenstein or his creature? In fact, the monster is not "other" at all; as D. L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf contend, "the monster is an ugly image of Victor's narcissism, the pride that leads him to style himself as a creator" (2005, p. 31). Through the doubling of the creator and his creature, Shelley anticipates such end-of-century doppelgänger novels as Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), which likewise explore the "monstrous" side of the divided self.

Stories about ghosts were popular among Victorians, in part reflecting the extent of the spiritualist movement that developed after Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory called into question traditional religious beliefs; however, horror novelists also created new types of monsters to replace the specters and feudal villains of eighteenth-century Gothic fiction. After the publication of *Frankenstein*, monster novels proliferated and splintered into subgenres, further illustrating the diversification of the horror novel in the nineteenth century. Ancient Egyptian monsters are the antagonists in such works as Jane (Webb) Loudon's *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century* (1827), which imagines a future in which electricity is used to resurrect the gruesome corpse of the pharaoh Cheops, and Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897), which is about a shape-shifting monster with a "huge, slimy, evil-smelling body" and "myriad legs," who hypnotizes and torments a politician in retaliation for the desecration of an ancient tomb (Marsh 2004, p. 52). Victorian werewolf novels include G. W. M. Reynolds's *Wagner, the Wehr-Wolf* (1846–1847)—a penny dreadful about a man who is transformed into a werewolf after making a pact with a demon—and Clemence Housman's female werewolf novel, *The Werewolf* (1896).

Vampires were the most popular of the nineteenth-century monsters. The first vampire tale—John Polidori's "The Vampyre" (1819)—was a product of the same ghost story contest that occasioned the writing of *Frankenstein*; thereafter vampires were taken up by novelists to explore a wide range of Victorian fears. Key texts are James Malcolm Rymer and Thomas Peckett Prest's pulpy and episodic *Varney the Vampire* (1845–1847), J. S. Le Fanu's lesbian novel *Carmilla* (1872), and Bram Stoker's classic work *Dracula* (1897). Appealing to middle- and working-class readers, the vampire novels feature "corrupt" aristocratic vampires and can be seen to dramatize nineteenth-century class struggles. After the publication of Darwin's *On the Origins of the*

Species (1859), bloodthirsty revenants were also used to express fears about atavistic regression; if human beings evolved from primitive life forms, was devolution also possible? Darwin's science made it harder to deny that humans—no matter how outwardly civilized—had the same animal impulses as other creatures. In Le Fanu's female vampire novel, such fears intersect with ideas about gender in the Victorian period. The vampire Carmilla attacks her victim, the virginal Laura, in highly sexualized scenes. Like most other nineteenth-century vampires, Carmilla is characterized as a sexual predator: the attacks occur while the victim is in bed, and they involve the penetration of teeth into the victim's throat or chest and an exchange of bodily fluids. Yet, like Victoria in *Zofloya*, Carmilla's actions are especially shocking (and salacious) because she is female. Carmilla is described as "a sooty-black animal," "a monstrous cat," "a beast in a cage," and "amphibious" (Le Fanu 2005, pp. 69, 146). Le Fanu's "beastly," (sexually) appetitive female vampire at once reinforces, and calls into question, Victorian ideals of female purity.

Many Victorian novels also engage anxieties about imperialism and race. In *Jane Eyre* (1847), Charlotte Brontë domesticates Gothic themes by relocating the Radcliffian plot to an isolated Yorkshire manor house. Like Radcliffe, Brontë privileges terror over horror and makes use of the explained supernatural. The unidealized heroine, a plain young English governess, is troubled by "preternatural" laughter and strange appearances at Thornfield Hall (2001, p. 91). Before her wedding to the brooding Mr. Rochester, she sees a strange, vampire-like creature tearing her wedding veil (p. 242). The revelation that Rochester was previously married, and that his insane Creole wife still lives in his house, is more horrifying to the governess than any supernatural explanation could be. According to Gayatri Spivak's classic reading of the novel, Bertha is the colonial "other" who must "set fire to the house and kill herself, so that Jane Eyre can become the feminist individualist heroine of British fiction" (1985, p. 251).

In his review for *Fraser's Magazine*, George Henry Lewes remarked that parts of *Jane Eyre* "smack of the circulating library," particularly the depiction of "the mad wife and all that relates to her"; yet, Lewes praised the work in general for its "truth" and "vividness" (1974, p. 85). Brontë accommodated the sensational elements to the domestic realism of the Victorian novel. Thus, she satisfied the popular taste for "melodrama and improbability" while appealing to the critical preference for realism (p. 85). Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847)—a dark tale of stormy passions and domestic brutality—likewise fuses romance and realism, yet whereas Jane achieves domestic happiness with her reformed Rochester, Catherine and Heathcliff's semi-incestuous, supernatural love affair will not be contained within bourgeois domesticity. One reviewer described it as "a terrific story, associated with an equally fearful and repulsive spot. It should have been called *Wuthering Heights*, for anything from which the mind and body would more instinctively shrink, than the mansion and its tenants, cannot be easily imagined" (Review of *Wuthering Heights* 1974, p. 229).

The Brontës' novels, like those by Shelley, Stevenson, Wilde, and Stoker, have enduring interest; they continue to be read, studied, and adapted today. The noncanonical Victorian horror novels represent a more ephemeral class of fiction. The penny dreadfuls or bloods were cheap, serialized, often plagiaristic novels, with no pretensions to literariness. The writers did not seek critical approbation. They were paid by the word and chased mass-market tastes. Consequently, the novels were often excessively long and excessive in other respects, too. Their excesses (like *Otranto's* excesses) garnered both thrills and laughter. For example, Rymer and Prest's lurid penny dreadful, *The String of Pearls* (1846–1847), recounts the story of Fleet Street barber Sweeney Todd, who slays his customers and sells their remains to a neighboring pie shop. Ghastly humor is created through the references to the "delicious pies; there was about them a flavour never surpassed, and rarely equalled; [...] oh! With what rapidity the pies disappeared!" (Rymer and Prest 2015a, p. 28). Jokes intersperse Rymer and Prest's other serialized horror novel, the rambling but entertaining *Varney the Vampire*. At one point in the tale, it is decided that the best way to get rid of the vampire, Sir Francis Varney, is to send him to America. One character reasons, "They will take good care there that he sucks no blood out of them; for, although an American would always rather lose a drop of blood than a dollar, they keep a pretty sharp look out upon both" (2015b, p. 411). In these and other texts, the teeter-tottering between horror and humor creates an "ambivalence of effect," which, according to Victor Sage, is "a central feature" of the horror genre (1994, p. 203).

If Victorian horror novelists often brokered between horror and humor, just as Walpole did, their novels also continued to evoke a mixed response in another sense too. The escapist penny bloods were popular with working-class readers, especially young men. Critics, on the other hand, regarded these works as depraved and corrupting. Victorian reviewers, like their Romantic predecessors, evaluated novels according to moral standards. As Patrick Brantlinger asserts, the Victorian "critics and educators did much moralizing about the sad state of popular tastes and the semi-literacy of the mass readership" who sought entertainment, not edification, from their reading material (1998, p. 170). It is noteworthy that many of the serialized horror novels (*The String of Pearls* and *Varney the Vampire* included) and shilling shockers (e.g., *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*) had urban settings. A good example is G. W. M. Reynolds's sensational *The Mysteries of London* (1845–1848), which is described by Fred Botting as a "darkly realistic [...] urban Gothic," in which London is shown to be a horrifying "labyrinth of immorality" (1996, p. 125). In such novels, the locus of horror is the teeming modern city, not a castle of old. The gritty settings seem to answer the critics' demands for realism, but the dark, urban milieus increased concerns about the deleterious effects of horror fiction. The urban horror novels tapped into prevalent fears about urbanization and moral decay by exposing the seedy underside of city life. Critics worried that the novels would exacerbate social problems by luring semi-literate readers into crime.

Urban corruption is a key theme in Wilde's fin-de-siècle horror novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Wilde drew inspiration from *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), a Romantic-period horror novel by an earlier Irish writer, Charles Maturin. In Maturin's book, John Melmoth sells his soul in order to extend his life; in Wilde's novel, a similar Faustian bargain is struck by Dorian Gray. Dorian is allowed to remain young and handsome, while a portrait of him grows old. Whereas Melmoth ends up wandering the earth as a miserable outsider, Dorian merely haunts London's dens of ill repute. As he partakes in sordid urban pleasures, his portrait becomes increasingly hideous, a reflection of his moral degradation. It is significant that Dorian is guided in his descent by a "poisonous book" given to him by the hedonist Lord Henry Wotton. Correspondingly, reviewers in the 1890s regarded Wilde's book as poisonous (Brantlinger 1998, p. 10). W. E. Henley of the *Scots Observer* denounced *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as follows:

it is false to human nature—for its hero is a devil; it is false to morality—for it is not made sufficiently clear that the writer does not prefer a course of *unnatural iniquity* to a life of cleanliness, health, and sanity. The story [...] deals with matters only fitted for the Criminal Investigative Department. (as cited in Gagnier 1986, p. 59; italics added)

During Wilde's 1895 trial for homosexuality, parts of *Dorian Gray* were read in court by the prosecuting attorney as evidence of the "unnatural iniquity" of Wilde's own offenses.

From the 1760s to the late Victorian period, the horror novel developed through a process of imitation and innovation, with novelists continuously reworking and updating the tropes that Walpole's book provided. Just as Walpole invented the horror novel by drawing from earlier texts and traditions, the late Victorian writers renewed the genre through a process of revision: Wilde adapted the Faust theme operating in *Melmoth the Wanderer* to tell his story about repression and double lives; Stoker's Count Dracula has more in common with the aristocratic villains of eighteenth-century Gothic novels than with the vampires of European folk legend. Horror writers have always profited from the popularity of their genre, and this has driven them to imitation and sometimes to cliché. Yet, as I have shown, writers were attentive to criticism: they responded to critics and parodists by adapting and updating the inherited formulae and by investing horror writing with greater realism. Ultimately, though, their concessions failed to secure a better reputation for horror novels. Their efforts often merely fuelled the longstanding critical concerns about horror's pernicious real-world effects. Moreover, many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century horror novelists ignored the critics and catered to general readers instead. Notwithstanding critics' obdurate hostility toward the genre, readers embraced horror novels—as readers continue to do. Indeed, horror's transgressive reputation goes a long way toward explaining the appeal of this genre both then and now.

NOTES

1. In the order in which they appear in Austen's list, the seven "horrid" novels are Eliza Parsons's *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (1793), Regina Maria Roche's *Clermont: A Tale* (1798), Eliza Parsons's *The Mysterious Warning, a German Tale* (1796), Karl Friedrich Kahlert's *The Necromancer, or The Tale of the Black Forest, Founded on Facts, Translated from the German of Lawrence Flammenberg by Peter Teuthold* (1794), Francis Lathom's *The Midnight Bell: A German Story Founded on Incidents in Real Life* (1798), Eleanor Sleath's *The Orphan of the Rhine: A Romance in Four Volumes* (1798), and Carl Grosse's *Horrid Mysteries: A Story Translated from the German of the Marquis of Grosse by Peter Will* (1796). *The Midnight Bell* is the only one that was not originally published by Minerva.
2. The anonymous author of the essay "Terrorist Novel Writing" (1799) expresses the conventional standards by which all novels were evaluated, as well as the prevailing negative attitudes toward horror writing: "A novel, if it is useful at all ought to be a representation of human life and manners, with a view to direct the conduct in the important duties of life, and to correct its follies," he insists; "But what instruction is to be reaped from the distorted ideas of lunatics, I am at a loss to conceive" (p. 224).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Austen, Jane. 2002. *Northanger Abbey*, ed. Claire Grogan. Peterborough, ON: Broadview.
- Bannet, Eve Tavor. 2011. Charles Brockden Brown and England: Of Genres, the Minerva Press, and the Early Republican Reprint Trade. In *Transatlantic Literary Exchanges, 1790–1870: Gender, Race, and Nation*, ed. Kevin Hutchins and Julia M. Wright, 133–152. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate.
- Bellin de la Liborlière, Louis François Marie. 2011. *The Hero; or, the Adventures of a Night*. Trans. Sophia Shedden. Ed. Natalie Neill. Kansas City: Valancourt.
- Blakey, Dorothy. 1996. *The Minerva Press, 1790–1820*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Botting, Fred. 1996. *Gothic*. London: Routledge.
- Brantlinger, Patrick. 1998. *The Reading Lesson: The Threat of Mass Literacy in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Brontë, Charlotte. 2001. *Jane Eyre*, ed. Richard J. Dunn. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Clery, E.J. 1995. *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762–1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. 1797. Review of *The Monk*, by Matthew Lewis. *Critical Review; or, Annals of Literature* 19: 194–200.
- . 1956. To William Lisle Bowles. 16 March 1797. In *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, vol. 1, 317–319. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Gagnier, Regenia. 1986. *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Gamer, Michael. 2000. *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Godwin, William. 2005. Preface. In *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams*, ed. William Godwin, 3–4. London: Penguin.

- Jacobs, Edward H. 2000. *Accidental Migrations: An Archaeology of Gothic Discourse*. London: Associated University Presses.
- Le Fanu, Sheridan J. 2005. *Carmilla*. Ägyptan Press.
- Lewes, G.H. 1974. Review of *Jane Eyre*, by Charlotte Brontë. *Frazer's Magazine*, December 1847, 36, 686–695. In *The Brontës: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Miriam Allott, 83–87. London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Lewis, Matthew. 1839. To His Mother. 18 May 1794. In *The Life and Correspondence of M. G. Lewis*, vol. 1, 122–124. London: Henry Colburn.
- . 2004. *The Monk*, ed. D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf. Peterborough, ON: Broadview.
- Macdonald, D.L., and Kathleen Scherf. 2004. Introduction. In *The Monk*, ed. Matthew Lewis, 21 Note 2. Peterborough, ON: Broadview.
- . 2005. Introduction. In *Frankenstein*, ed. Mary Shelley, 11–42. Peterborough, ON: Broadview.
- Marsh, Richard. 2004. *The Beetle*, ed. Julian Wolfreys. Peterborough, ON: Broadview.
- Mathias, Thomas James. 1808. *The Pursuits of Literature*. 14th ed. London: T. Becket.
- Norton, Rictor. 1999. *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe*. London: Leicester University Press.
- Peacock, Thomas Love. 1986. *Nightmare Abbey/Crotchet Castle*. London: Penguin.
- . 2001. To Percy Bysshe Shelley. 30 August 1818. In *The Letters of Thomas Love Peacock*, ed. Nicholas A. Joukovsky, vol. 1, 146–147. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Pearson, Jacqueline. 1999. *Women's Reading in Britain, 1750–1835: A Dangerous Recreation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Radcliffe, Ann. 2000. On the Supernatural in Poetry. In *Gothic Documents: A Sourcebook, 1700–1820*, ed. E.J. Clery and Robert Miles, 163–172. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.
- Reeve, Clara. 1780. Preface. In *The Old English Baron: A Gothic Story*, 2nd ed., iii–viii. London: Charles Dilly.
- Review of *The Castle of Otranto*, by Horace Walpole. 1765. *Monthly Review* 32, May: 394.
- Review of *Wuthering Heights*, by Emily Brontë. 1974. *New Monthly Magazine*, January 1848: 140. In *The Brontës: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Miriam Allott, 229. London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Review of *Zofloya*, by Charlotte Dacre. 1806. *Literary Journal* 1, June: 631–635.
- Russell, Deborah. 2016. Gothic Romance. In *Romantic Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, ed. Angela Wright and Dale Townshend, 55–72. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Rymer, James Malcolm, and Thomas Peckett Prest. 2015a. *Sweeney Todd: The String of Pearls*. New York: Dover.
- . 2015b. *Varney the Vampire*. New York: Dover.
- S., R. 1798. *The New Monk*. London: William Lane.
- Sade, Marquis de. 1966. Reflections on the Novel. In *The 120 Days of Sodom and Other Writings*, 97–116. Trans. Austryn Wainhouse and Richard Seaver. New York: Grove.
- Sage, Victor. 1994. Gothic Laughter: Farce and Horror in Five Texts. In *Gothick Origins and Innovations*, ed. Allan Lloyd-Smith and Victor Sage, 31–59. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1985. Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism. *Critical Inquiry* 12: 243–261.

- Terrorist Novel Writing. 1799. *The Spirit of the Public Journals for 1797*. Vol. 1, 223–225. London: James Ridgway.
- Walpole, Horace. 1937. To William Cole. 22 August 1778. In *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W.S. Lewis and A. Dayle Wallace, vol. 2, 109–112. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- . 2014a. *The Castle of Otranto*, ed. Nick Groom. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- . 2014b. Preface. In *The Castle of Otranto*, ed. Horace Walpole, 2nd ed., 9–14. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Watt, James. 1999. *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764–1832*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wolfreys, Julian. 2000. 'I Wants to Make Your Flesh Creep': Notes Toward a Reading of the Comic-Gothic in Dickens. In *Victorian Gothic: Literary and Cultural Manifestations in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Ruth Robbins and Julian Wolfreys, 31–59. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave.



“The Horror! The Horror!”: Tracing Horror in Modernism from Conrad to Eliot

Matthias Stephan

“The Horror! The Horror!”; these lines represent not only the most memorable quotation from Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* but have also come to encapsulate an entire vision of humanity from the latter part of the nineteenth century through the end of the First World War. In fact, I would argue that the sentiment has never been dispelled and that subsequent ages have continued to struggle with the profound disturbance that leads Kurtz to utter such a phrase. This reaction, in the face of a reality that is too stark and too brutal to even be described, is sustained into the subsequent decades as that horror advances from the obscured reaches of “Darkest Africa” to the flowered fields of Europe. “The horror” then becomes emblematic of our age and an emerging theme throughout Modernism. The present chapter will trace the tone of horror from Conrad into the High Modernist texts of Eliot, differentiating the way the mood is captured symbolically and through poetic convention, in contrast to the narrative horror presented by scholars like Noël Carroll (1990, p. 187).

Conrad’s own works illuminate the tension at the end of the nineteenth century, with the combination of the imperialism inherent in Victorian ideas of progress and the push toward expansion in technology as well as territory. In his African stories, he combines voyages into the recesses of the Congo, with a mission to extract value from the colonies, with the images of horror in the face of atrocities that he meets. For example, in “The Congo Diary”, he gives an account of his own journey up the Niger River in the Summer of 1890, and, although confronted directly with death, notes when he “saw at a camp[in]g

M. Stephan (✉)
Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark

place the dead body of a Backongo. Shot? Horrid smell,” and then a few days later “saw another dead body lying by the path in an attitude of meditative repose” (2007, pp. 100, 102). In neither of these incidents does Conrad seem particularly disturbed by the sight of death. His unaffectedness isn’t simply a product of race, as the mentioning of white men dying or dead produces a similar affect, but it seems to be a product of his outlook in completing his mission, that death and decay were both a reality in Africa and an acceptable and unremarkable price to pay for the progress associated with the endeavor. Yet, eight years later in *Heart of Darkness*, he paints another picture of Africa, using his unusual sea captain, Marlow, and his drive for exploration, citing his “passion for maps” and “hankering after” the “biggest, most blank” part of Africa, the uncharted territory of the Congo (2007, pp. 8–9). This tale is both about the allure of progress and also about the dangers of it, where Marlow prefaces his tale with parallels in the Roman times, of seeking progress and feeling “in some inland post” the “savagery, the utter savagery, had closed round him” and presented with “the fascination of the abomination” (p. 7). In this episode, Marlow’s preface to the main story in *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad encapsulates the tension between progress and horror which comes to reflect the sentiment of the Modernists to come. As Conrad notes, “the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze,” or “the spectral illumination of moonshine” (p. 6). It is this veiled vision through which we come to understand the horrors of the age, through the veil of the Modernist use of symbolism and poetic convention.

Modernism is a fluid concept, describing a break from tradition and a movement toward a new age. The central characteristic of Modernism, its radical desire to break with tradition, ties it closely to the concept of progress, as evidenced in the various avant-garde movements, particularly Futurism. Marinetti’s “Manifesto of Futurism” shares the *fin de siècle* agitation generally ascribed to Modernism but considers it a positive and dynamic factor: “Let us go! At last Mythology and the mystic cult of the ideal have been left behind. We are going to be present at the birth of the centaur and we shall soon see the first angels fly! We must break down the gates of life to test the bolts and the padlocks! Let us go!...” (Marinetti 1972, pp. 39–40). In Marinetti’s vision, violence and war are objects not of horror but of exaltation since they (along with speed, technology, and industrialization) facilitate progress, the inevitable overcoming of all obstacles. “We are on the extreme promontory of the centuries! What is the use of looking behind at the moment when we must open the mysterious shutters of the impossible? ... We want to glorify war—the only cure for the world” (p. 41).

The glory of war is a sentiment that continues in the lead up to the era’s great turning point, the war to end all wars. Rupert Brooke most concisely captures this mood in his sonnet, “The Soldier,” from 1914. In elegiac tones, he contemplates the soldier’s sacrifice of his life for his country and conveys it as a moment of patriotic pride and honor:

A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by the suns of home. (Brooke 2012, lines 5–8)

Thus, even the Great War was not universally conceived with anxiety and apprehension but, as in Marinetti, was championed and romanticized. Though the tones are markedly different, with a contrast between the elegiac exaltation of Brooke's romantic patriotism and the bombastic urgency of Marinetti's call to arms, both artists' vision of the future is positive and progressive, with sacrifice considered worthy in its pursuit. This was true not only of the poetry itself but also its reception. Howarth claims that, “Brooke's poetry sold not on account of its formal power, but because people wanted to buy into Brooke's person,” indicating that there was a large audience for this type of view—simultaneously patriotic and progressive yet also nostalgic and romantic (2006, p. 272). Yet, some argue that this was a concerted effort to elevate Brooke “to a glorified icon of national loss” in a “well-organized campaign to capitalize on Brooke's poetically inspiring decease for nationalistic purposes,” and that this sentiment isn't necessarily reflective of Brooke's oeuvre, in the period leading up to the war (Bristow 2014, p. 664). Bristow argues that Brooke “remained preoccupied with death” and it features as a common theme in his poetry up until his celebrated death in 1915 (p. 664).

In contrast to the elegiac tone, in Brooke's celebrated poetry, Thomas Hardy's “Channel Firing” gives an indication that the *fin de siècle* agitation has carried over and some anticipate the upcoming war with dread rather than optimism. Hardy's poem opens with premonition of death, even as the poem precedes the war itself. The opening lines, “That night your great guns, unawares, / Shook all our coffins as we lay,” start us with the impression of awakening corpses, only to conflate that with soldiers in a position of the anticipation of war (Hardy 2012, p. 1939). The use of the imagery of “coffins,” the “Judgement-day,” and “skeletons,” reinforces the notion that the soldiers are fated for death, with the poem offering no cause as worthy, in contrast to Brooke.

So down we lay again. “I wonder,
Will the world ever saner be,”
Said one, “than when He sent us under
In our indifferent century!”
And many a skeleton shook his head. (p. 1940)

Both the imagery and the sentiment of Hardy's poems carry forth into the war poetry, yet, while Hardy evokes the symbols of death, he doesn't imbue the poem with the sense of horror faced by Kurtz. That sense only comes with the poets who have been faced directly with the atrocities of war.

One such poet is Wilfred Owen. On the 31st of December 1917, recalling his first experiences of the war in a letter to his mother, he describes the look upon the faces of his fellow soldiers:

But chiefly I thought of the very strange look on all faces in that camp; an incomprehensible look, which a man will never see in England, though wars should be in England; nor can it be seen in any battle. But only in Étaples.

It was not despair, or terror, it was more terrible than terror, for it was a blind-fold look, and without expression, like a dead rabbit's.

It will never be painted, and no actor will ever seize it. And to describe it, I think I must go back and be with them. (2012c, p. 2042)

Reflecting his experiences in a training camp, which also served soldiers who had returned to the front (including the remnants of the battalion to which Owen would be attached as they returned decimated from the Battle of the Somme), Owen's letter conveys the same sentiment found earlier in Conrad—this is a horror that cannot be described and cannot be overcome. The look on the faces of the soldiers is identical to the look of horror that accompanies Kurtz's "cry that was no more than a breath" (Conrad 2007, p. 86). The contrast between horror and terror is well established in Gothic criticism. Varma contends that "the difference between Terror and Horror is the difference between awful apprehension and sickening realization: between the smell of death and stumbling against a corpse" (1957, p. 130). Owen's description is of soldiers who have faced the atrocities of war and are reacting to a truly horrific situation—not the scare of modern-day narrative horror, but the deep combination of fear and dread that lingers long after the object of horror has been removed. Maria Beville notes, following Radcliffe, that "the power of terror ... is in suggestion" while "horror is a limiting experience as it presents the horrifying event in full and grotesque detail, causing the imagination to shrink and recoil into repressive isolation" (2009, p. 89). Beville's definition of horror captures the look "without expression" that Owen describes and gives name to that expression, which is "more terrible than terror" (Owen 2012d, p. 2042). This sentiment is captured, specifically in the poetry of Wilfred Owen, and his fellow acclaimed World War I poets, as well as in other Modernist poets such as T.S. Eliot. What they do, however, is sublimate this sensation of horror and express the feelings through symbolism, form, and poetic effect. This achieves the romantic ideal of allowing us the space to be led to the feeling of the horror, even if we aren't (and wouldn't want to be) in a position to experience the horror firsthand. This is also found in Radcliffe, in her references to Milton's image of "horror plumed." In Radcliffe's distinction, the power of terror, rather than horror, relies on its connection to the sublime. In Milton, she claims:

As an image, it certainly is sublime; it fills the mind with an idea of power, but it does not follow that Milton intended to declare the feeling of horror to be sub-

lime; and after all, his image imparts more of terror than of horror; for it is not distinctly pictured forth, but is seen in glimpses through obscuring shades, the great outlines only appearing, which excite the imagination to complete the rest. (2000, pp. 168–169)

Yet, what is interesting here is that the description of the sublime nature of Milton’s image hinges only on the reader’s obscurity, not the obscurity of the image in the diegesis. Narrative horror, as presented by Noël Carroll, which focuses on the appearance of the monster in inciting horror, fits very well with the description above by Varma, in which the anticipation exhibits the terror (the audience or reader’s anticipation), and the horror comes when the monster or previous object of terror is revealed. What Milton’s text does is to present the image as horrific but not present its details to the reader, only the effect of the horror—thus creating for Radcliffe the concurrent effects of terror (the sublime feeling) through reference to horrific objects. This is the methodology picked up by the Modernist poets, who when confronted with the idea of presenting the horrors of World War I, use only symbolism and imagery and thus present such horrors as “glimpses through obscuring shades” and “great outlines,” heightening our reaction to the horror and presenting it as the sublime experience that we associate with terror only.

This alters our understanding of poetry and its social function. As Pericles Lewis notes, “The modernists increasingly sought to understand and make their poetry express the transformative power of history. This meant a new concern with change and a new assessment of literary tradition” (2010, p. 149). Much like the Romantics, in the wake of the French Revolution, the Modernist poets were forced to reassess the role of art and poetry in the wake of World War I. The pre-war years, which had championed formal change in art and literature and sported an optimistic belief in progress, were now looked upon, in retrospect, as *La Belle Époque*. In the wake of the war, poetry needed to engage with the emotion and subjective responses to the devastation and broad changes. “At the same time, writers who had aimed before the war at developing an impersonal and almost timeless style, suited—as Pound wrote—for ‘direct treatment of the ‘thing,’ became more concerned during the war with the expression of subjective experience” (Lewis 2010, p. 149). Due to the scale of the destruction and the scope of the horror, they no longer have the confidence that poetry could adequately express the sense of the time. The positive views of progress, the sense of “make it new” from Ezra Pound, and the championing of progress and technology from the Futurists were untenable once faced with the realities of war. Foreshadowing Adorno’s post World War II sentiment, Owen famously claimed, in the unfinished preface to his posthumously published 1920 collection *Poems*, that “above all I am not concerned with Poetry. My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity” (2012d, p. 2042).

Yet, it is through poetry that we best understand this devastation, attesting to the power of art to represent such sentiments, even as explanation and rational

thought are powerless to, and even though Owen is unable to describe the horror directly. In Owen's "Anthem of Doomed Youth," the poetic form itself seems to work against the poem's sentiment (2012a, pp. 2034–2035). By juxtaposing the positive associations of the term "anthem," used for national pride and resolute marches, with the fatalistic adjective, reminiscent of Hardy's imagery in "Channel Firing," he creates a sense of dread from the outset. The deft use of onomatopoeic alliteration of "the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle" puts us on the battlefields, and the comparison of the "wailing shells" to church choirs of country villages, reinforced by the end-rhyme association of "bells" with "shells" and "guns" with "orisons," further heightens the funerary effect of Owen's inverted elegy (2012a, pp. 2034–2035). Owen thus uses the sonnet form against itself, for "Anthem of Doomed Youth" as opposed to the revelatory presentation that we have seen in Brooke, highlights the futility and senseless slaughter of the war. In discussing Keats's "To Autumn," Jerome McGann argues that "the beauty of the mediations, though recognizably fictional, nevertheless promise a real, human benefit ... [they] can transform one's felt response to the ideas of change, death, decay" and that they "can have this consoling power" (1979, p. 1039). However, in representing the atrocities of war, Owen takes up a much less consoling tone, as the final resolution of the sonnet, with the evocation of the closing of the dying soldiers' eyes, alone in a flowerless field and far from the mourning of their friends and families, exhibits the futility of the enterprise of war.

In "Dulce et decorum est," Owen uses more clearly horrific imagery to capture the nightmarish conditions of the battlefield: "In all my dreams, before my helpless sight, / He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning" (2012b, lines 15–16). Here he recollects the moments of his fellow soldier's death in graphic detail, transforming the image of the compatriot to that of the corpse, succumbing to the effects of poison gas:

And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues (lines 19–24)

Unlike Varma's corpse, and despite the graphic details, the poem is steeped in metaphor, relating the decomposing face to both the devil and sin, which attaches the ravages of war to hell rather than the soldier himself. The injuries suffered are treated as invasive, compared to cancer, centered on a froth that is corrupting the soldier not emanating from him, and finally separating the vile sores from that of the innocence of those that once could speak with these tongues, but are now unable to as much as breathe a sigh. Thus, while it presents, in graphic fashion, the effects of the gas, it also reinforces the innocence and youth of the soldier himself—removing him from complicity and

highlighting the senselessness of his death. The poem ends, famously, declaring the propaganda we say in Brooke's poem, "pro patria mori" as a lie, which is reinforced through the message of the poem (line 28). No gains are presented or conceived that account for this level of suffering. The romantic sentiment of the glory of war is vividly rejected through Owen's use of the imagery of death.

In "Strange Meeting," Owen evokes the image of the risen corpse, a well-known trope of horror fiction, but again does so in a more symbolic than visceral way. The mutual recognition ("With piteous recognition in fixed eyes" ... / And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall,—) makes the encounter with this "Strange friend" take on an extra level of uncanniness by subtly evoking a different horror trope, that of the double, or *doppelgänger* ("Whatever hope is yours, / Was my life also") (2012e, lines 7, 10). Owen presents this encounter as absent of terror, as he claims, "By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell," and yet this is an encounter not only of the dead enemy but of his own death as well. Like many of Owen's poems, "Strange Meeting" focuses on the futility of war. In the final stanza, he identifies the narrative voice with the deceased:

I am the enemy you killed, my friend.
I knew you in this dark: for so you frowned
Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed.
I parried: but my hands were loath and cold.
Let us sleep now.... (2012e, lines 40–45)

This narrative turn allows for the poet to present his own death, the parallel experience to that of the enemy soldier, since the final narrative voice speaks of their sleeping *together*, and thus the original speaker also succumbs to the travesty of the futile war.

As we move away from poets who were directly involved in the war, we can start to see how the pre-war undercurrent of horror, having surfaced with the war poets, finally spills into the imagery and symbolism of High Modernist writers. Figures like Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot had, prior to the war, championed the destruction of form, and the avant-garde movements had pushed for an escape from tradition altogether. However, T.S. Eliot presents a merging of the traditions of the past with the creation of new forms, the elicitation of old themes presented in perverse forms that strip them of their narrative power, leaving only a symbolic trace, in order to demonstrate the ineffectiveness of traditional approaches. Lewis argues that this approach orients Modernist symbolism to a wider audience. "Modern poetry used new forms, words set 'at liberty,' in F.T. Marinetti's phrase, to engage with the literary tradition that the earlier avant-gardes had often shunned. It inherited the symbolist emphasis on private meanings, but reoriented this symbolism in order to reach a broad reading public" (2007, p. 130). Yet, *The Waste Land* is full of imagery that is difficult to unpack and full of allusions to often obscure literary sources, popular culture, and the occult. Furthermore, these images and allusions are often subverted,

destabilizing conventional interpretations. Similar to Yeats's memorable "rough beast," which "slouches towards Bethlehem" from "The Second Coming" (1919), references to resurrection myths abound in Eliot's *The Waste Land* (Yeats 2012, line 23). While Yeats's gyre represents his own idiosyncratic understanding of world history and interprets the current devastation in the aftermath of World War I as a sign of the coming of a new historical epoch, Eliot's poem subtly disallows for the possibility of a new cycle, whether good or bad. Lewis notes that "in *The Waste Land*, however, the god himself is conspicuously absent, except in debased forms like the (missing) Hanged Man in the Tarot pack or the drowned Phoenician Sailor, who returns as 'Phlebas the Phoenician' in the fourth section 'Death by Water'" (2007, p. 134). With this undermining of the resurrection, the poem presents the idea that either the focal point of history is lacking—be it religious, political, or historical—or that the search for it is futile, perhaps a precursor to sentiments not presented until the postmodern era.

While war remains a prominent touchstone in the 1920s, Eliot's poem does not engage with it directly, as we see in the World War I poets. He presents risen corpses, flowing over London Bridge, but without the horrific imagery of Rosenberg, Sassoon, or Owen. Rather, *The Waste Land* represents the vastness of the destruction, in numbers too large to imagine, and too horrifying to contemplate, such that they can only be represented symbolically. Eliot ties the casualties of war to the rat swarm in lines 115, "I think we are in rats' alley / Where the dead men lost their bones" (2012b, line 115). Lewis connects this imagery to that of Sassoon in "Aftermath," which presents swarms of rats infiltrating the trenches, and such rat swarms are a common trope throughout Gothic and horror fiction, from Poe ("The Pit and the Pendulum") to, slightly later, H.P. Lovecraft ("The Rats in the Walls"). Veterans of the war turn up as characters in Modernist novels and poems, including Albert in *The Waste Land* and, notably, the shell-shocked soldier Septimus Smith in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*. Finally, unlike Owen, who positioned himself in opposition to the patriotic and romantic notions of Brooke's poetry with his reference to the lie of "pro patria mori," Eliot here parodies the notion, as well as the concept of resurrection: "That corpse you planted last year in your garden, / 'Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?'" (2012b, lines 72–73). Even the end of the poem—from the nursery rhyme parody to the multiple foreign allusions to the temporary pain of purgatory, delayed spring, and its anticipation, followed by the reference to Kyd's Hieronimo—presents the wasteland not as a way station before finally entering paradise, or as the end of an era from which a new age would be reborn (as Yeats might be interpreted), but as unrecoverable destruction (2012b, lines 427–432). The use of a translation of the Upanishad, presenting the peace that passes without understanding, seems a fitting ironic end to a poem that underscores death and the travesties of war that defy rational understanding and permit only this symbolic representation (2012b, lines 433–434).

Perhaps the clearest expression of the symbolic nature of High Modernism's connection to horror can be found in Eliot's 1925 poem, "The Hollow Men."

The imagery of the “rat’s coat, crowskin, crossed staves” again connects this poem to death and decay through the reference to rats and crows, often symbols of the underworld, and to the crossed staves of a cross or crucifix (2012a, line 33). The poem speaks of a “dead land,” a “valley of dying stars,” and the “last of meeting places” and the “beach on a tumid river” can be connected both to Dante’s *Inferno*—as a reference to the Acheron, the river of woe of Greek mythology, whose shores are plied by Charon who escorts the dead to the underworld—and, finally, to the Congo River in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (2012a, lines 29, 54, 57, 60). With the epigraph, “*Mistah Kurtz – he dead,*” Eliot positions “the horror” of Kurtz’s dying exclamation as both the starting point and central symbol that this cycle is based on: the lingering horror of gruesome reality and the constant reminder before the eyes of those who have faced it. The final lines of that poem are not as positive or forward thinking as “The Waste Land,” which Lewis argues “ultimately does promise a new beginning” (2007, p. 134). Here, the repeated lines,

*This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper* (lines 95–99)

suggest just the opposite, that there is no moving on from the devastating effects of the war and the horror inherent within it. It is a reality, which in Conrad’s text, our narrator, Marlow, would rather conceal from Kurtz’s wife at the end of the novella. The epigraph brings this imagery full circle, for as Conrad’s narrator shied away from revealing the truth of Kurtz’s final words, Kurtz himself concealed the object of horror from both Marlow and, consequently, the reader. “Anything approaching the change that came over his features I have never seen before, and hope never to see again. ... He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision—he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath: ‘The horror! The horror!’” (Conrad 2007, p. 86). This expression then stands in for reality, with which Kurtz was faced, and that in turn produces a similar sublime effect for Marlow and, on the retelling, to Marlow’s audience. Eliot, then, and the High Modernist poets take up this same imagery, partially concealing these horrors, veiling the destruction, disenchantment, and fragmentation through their use of symbolism and poetic conventions, and yet still showing us the horror of the age.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Beville, Maria. 2009. *Gothic-Postmodernism: Voicing the Terrors of Postmodernity*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Bristow, Joseph. 2014. Rupert Brooke’s Poetic Deaths. *English Literary History* 81 (2): 663–692.
- Brooke, Rupert. 2012. The Soldier. In *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. F: The Twentieth Century and After, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Jahan Ramazani, and Jon Stallworthy, 9th ed., 2018. London: Norton.

- Carroll, Noël. 1990. *The Philosophy of Horror: Or Paradoxes of the Heart*. New York: Routledge.
- Conrad, Joseph. 2007. *Heart of Darkness*. London: Penguin Classics.
- Eliot, T.S. 2012a. The Hollow Men. In *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. F: The Twentieth Century and After, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Jahan Ramazani, and Jon Stallworthy, 9th ed., 2543–2546. London: Norton.
- . 2012b. The Waste Land. In *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. F: The Twentieth Century and After, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Jahan Ramazani, and Jon Stallworthy, 9th ed., 2530–2543. London: Norton.
- Hardy, Thomas. 2012. Channel Firing. In *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. F: The Twentieth Century and After, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Jahan Ramazani, and Jon Stallworthy, 9th ed., 1939–1940. London: Norton.
- Howarth, Peter. 2006. Rupert Brooke's Celebrity Aesthetic. *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920* 49 (3): 272–292.
- Lewis, Pericles. 2007. *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2010. Inventing Modernism at the Outbreak of the Great War. In *London, Modernism, and 1914*, ed. Michael K. Walsh. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso. 1972. The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism. In *Marinetti: Selected Writings*, ed. R.W. Flint. Trans. R.W. Flint and Arthur A. Coppatelli. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- McGann, Jerome. 1979. Keats and the Historical Method in Literary Criticism. *Modern Language Notes* 94 (5): 988–1032.
- Owen, Wilfred. 2012a. Anthem for Doomed Youth. In *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. F: The Twentieth Century and After, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Jahan Ramazani, and Jon Stallworthy, 9th ed., 2034–2035. London: Norton.
- . 2012b. Dulce et decorum est. In *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. F: The Twentieth Century and After, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Jahan Ramazani, and Jon Stallworthy, 9th ed., 2037. London: Norton.
- . 2012c. From Owen's Letters to His Mother – December 31, 1917. In *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. F: The Twentieth Century and After, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Jahan Ramazani, and Jon Stallworthy, 9th ed., 2042. London: Norton.
- . 2012d. Preface. In *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. F: The Twentieth Century and After, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Jahan Ramazani, and Jon Stallworthy, 9th ed., 2042. London: Norton.
- . 2012e. Strange Meeting. In *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. F: The Twentieth Century and After, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Jahan Ramazani, and Jon Stallworthy, 9th ed., 2041–2042. London: Norton.
- Radcliffe, Ann. 2000. On the Supernatural in Poetry. In *Gothic Documents: A Sourcebook 1700–1820*, ed. E.J. Clery and Robert Miles, 163–171. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Varma, Devendra. 1957. *The Gothic Flame*. London: Arthur Baker.
- Yeats, William Butler. 2012. The Second Coming. In *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. F: The Twentieth Century and After, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Jahan Ramazani, and Jon Stallworthy, 9th ed., 2099. London: Norton.



Global Horror: Pale Horse, Pale Rider

David Punter

In 1980, Julia Kristeva published her book *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, which has since gone on to resonate through the study of horror, however we might conceive the term. Looking back on it after some thirty-five years, it presents itself curiously. It begins with a set of extremely complex post-Lacanian psychoanalytic propositions, edging toward anthropological studies on filth, detritus, taboo, and the marginalized; it then goes on to a series of studies in biblical texts, focusing on abomination and sin. These are followed by an intensive study, consisting very largely of quotations, of the author Céline. Céline seemed at the time, and has seemed since, an odd choice by a feminist, left-field author, bearing in mind his unrepentant fascism and anti-semitism; Kristeva's argument seems to be that in plumbing the depths of abjection—her key term—Céline exposes for us all the limits of the human and, at the same time, the ghastly glories of linguistic *jouissance*, evidenced, one can only suppose, in his breathless, over-excitably style. The true “miracle” of Céline, we find, “resides in the very experience of one's reading—it is fascinating, mysterious, intimately nocturnal, and liberating by means of a laughter without complacency yet complicitous” (Kristeva 1982, p. 133). Kristeva links this with her extraordinary claim that, in the face of horror, the *literary* in general can provide a “solution.”

In this way, as in several others, *Powers of Horror* is an idealistic text, both culturally and socially. For example, she confidently predicts the demise of religion as a source of horror: the worlds of such theological illusions, she claims, “now dead and buried, have given way to our dreams and deliriums if not to politics or science—the religions of modern times” (p. 133). If only, one might

D. Punter (✉)

School of Humanities, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK

fairly say, that had proved to be true, as of course might well have seemed possible during the intellectual (and, perhaps, Parisian) heyday of the 1960s and 1970s: before the vast, unsettling irruption of radical Islam came to demonstrate the continuing potency—the survival even in a form of un-death—of forms of fundamentalist orthodoxy that expose the weakness of any post-Enlightenment project, even while they provide us with ever-new forms of horror, from video execution, to the murder of elderly priests, to the use of a truck to kill at a national celebration.

The old horrors, it would seem, have not gone away; and it would perhaps always have seemed unlikely that literature could take on the responsibility for their banishment. What might initially seem alternatively true is that increases in global communication have enabled the spread of horror to gain new traction, as we potentially know more about the world's current catastrophes; yet even here we need to tread cautiously. It would be too easy to jump glibly to conclusions about the force of "globalization," but globalization itself, as I shall contend later, should be seen as a mask; a mask for inequality, for radical differences of power, eventually for the near-invisible horror of the greed represented by the phantomatic figure of incarnate capitalism.

Literature, to repeat what should perhaps be all too obvious, does not represent a solution; but certainly over the last decades, it has provided a rich repertoire of horror, and in this chapter, I hope to give and connect some examples from a variety of sources. One of my central, if infrequently stated, assumptions is that old motifs of horror—the vampire, the zombie, premature burial—have been continually mobilized, adapted, and infused with new strength in recent fiction; attendant on that, necessarily, is some commentary on the ways in which political arrangements seem enduringly capable of inventing new means of creating and enforcing horror—not just as an aberration but also as a principle of control, as Kafka said many years ago in "In the Penal Colony" (1919): "it's machine", he says, like no other" (Kafka 1996, p. 53).

We can start at the beginning; for in the beginning was the body. The body, we might say, as undifferentiated, as what Deleuze and Guattari rather endearingly call the "body without organs"¹—endearingly, that is, because again with history's hindsight we would now have to wonder whether that absence of organs is simply an after-effect, as in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005), of organ-harvesting erected into a state principle. But the differentiation of the body has gone through so many stages that we might need to think only of one here as emblematic of so many others: namely the unending attempts by imperial powers to split the body of the other into differentiable types, from, for example, mulatto to quadroon and octaroon, the failed yet unceasing endeavor to establish the "pure race," "pure blood."

Helen Oyeyemi's protagonists in, for example, *White Is for Witching* (2009) and *The Opposite House* (2007) do not consider themselves to be of "pure blood." Rather, they are migrants, shape-changers, misfits. Miranda in *White Is for Witching* seeks to counteract this evolving sense of being "out of her body," out of her place and time, through pica, through the ingestion of the non-

nutritional, which serves as a specific emblem for abjection. Here the racial hatred with which Oyejemi's novels are so thoroughly yet delicately suffused is internalized: if the world around does not provide nourishment, then the body will replicate and develop this privation. The horror will become that of one's own face in the mirror, one's own alienated body, one's own contaminated organs, contaminated by any contact with a world that offers itself only as a delusion, an affectation of care and nurture where none exists.

In *The Opposite House*, Maja, a Cuban refugee with only one memory of the "time before," a memory that may well be false, and with a problematic pregnancy—problematic in that it might or might not exist—is hateful in several senses: she is a narcissist who needs to drive her own desperate will into the world at the expense of all around her. There is something appealing in her needs, as in Miranda's; but we are left in no doubt that this monstrosity, this abjection tuned to a fatal degree, is induced, is the effect of the destruction of the body implied in each look, each glance these tortured heroines receive.

Thus, "body-horror," in the conventional and overwhelmingly filmic version of the term, reveals itself as horror of the body, the need to punish it for the very acquiescence it might otherwise show in systems of control that have no basis in reason or justice. Along this bitter trajectory are situated all the paraphernalia of racial prejudice, migration, the refugee, colonial destruction, slavery, and rape. We can find these motifs, of course, across wide swathes of the globe, where the after-effects of earlier horrors—perhaps, for example, those summed up so well by Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* (1899)—continue to exert pressure from often unseen depths, much like the transgenerational phantoms of Abraham and Torok (Abraham 1994). But we can find them easily enough in the West, in, for example, the war-time England of Andrea Levy's *Small Island* (2004), where among the many painful scenes are those where language opens up to reveal an abyss across which communication cannot take place. We have here a strange, even perhaps an uncanny, inversion, peculiarly intensified in English: because as a world language it is subject to such major inflections, then alongside the potential *jouissance*, as Kristeva would have it, of communication, we simultaneously have language as a weapon, as an instrument that is capable of fine-tuning discrimination so that all the subjugated participants can do is to stand back and look on as their words are perverted, altered, misunderstood—in horror.

Jamaica Kincaid, in *A Small Place* (1988), a horrifying account of the desolation and fragility of postcolonial Antigua, has her heroine find her sole refuge in a library, but even this provides no consolation from the chill winds, since it merely reflects the culture and language of the conqueror who has now redoubled, multiplied his conquest by retreating from the field of battle, leaving nothing but shards, bits and pieces, the remains of a military and cultural arsenal whose shapes and forms make no enduring sense. But in her sparser, barer, even more obsessive novel *Mr. Potter* (2002), this desolation becomes an internal landscape, a landscape owned by the heroine's perpetually absent father, whose fate of indifference has merely replicated itself on the world around him and on his daughter:

Mr. Potter's appearance in the world was a combination of sadness, joy, and a chasm of silent horror for his mother (Elfrida Robinson) and indifference to his father (Nathaniel Potter), who had so many children that none of them mattered at all, for the world is filled with many people and each of them is like a second in a minute and a minute is in an hour and an hour is in a day and a day is in a week and a week is in a month and a month is in a year and a year is in a century and a century is in a millennium and a millennium is in the world and the world eventually becomes a picture trapped in a four-sided frame. (Kincaid 2002, p. 188)

This is the paradoxical horror of “in-difference,” the reduction to a photograph or a lost portrait; but photographs and portraits, of course, need names if they are not to fade away entirely, and, here in this world of postcolonial decrepitude, there are no reliable names anymore; everything is on the verge of the abyss, of slipping away. It is only the rich, the colonizers, those who wield power because it is their right to wield power, who have the privilege of retaining their names, however desperately we hear these names, the names of Elfrida and Nathaniel, articulated as though they might incarnate that which has been lost, suppressed, subdued by the years of horror.

The obliteration of the name is, as we have known since Huxley and Orwell, one of the major instruments of totalitarianism. In Adam Johnson's chilling account of life in North Korea, *The Orphan Master's Son* (2012), all names are uncertain: the protagonist is, probably, not an orphan, but in this state—this country, this condition—of confinement and control, there is no real way of finding out. The narrative is divided into two: the narrators of each may be the same man, or they may not; such is the interchangeability of identity under conditions where “bare life” is all that may be hoped for—or feared. From prison camp to scarcely less imprisoning apartment, where the electricity is terminally unreliable (the “Glory of Mount Paektu”), in a city where the lights never function overnight, what is most certain is the reality of torture, whether this be by the methods of the apparently more humane present interrogators or by those of the older secret police known as the Pubyok, representatives of a still more brutal regime where lobotomies were commonly performed through the eye. The abjections of fascism, as described by that strange fictional hybrid whom we may call, “Céline Kristeva,” seem to figure here as little more than a romantic dream, a *nostalgie de la boue*, which is constantly discredited by the gritty, grimy, endlessly horrifying realities of pain, where there is no fantasy ending, no “culture of redemption” to show a way out of the violent exigencies of the night.

Night, too, is the common time of Haruki Murakami's equally double-voiced novel, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* (1985), where the central oft-repeated, traumatic horror is of incarceration. Kristeva speaks of “dreams and delusions,” and Murakami's novel is indeed a thing of fantasy and wonder; but, the dreams are not pleasant ones, they are ones born of endless repetition, a subsidence into a totalitarian frame of mind. This is engendered, of course, by the state, but thoroughly internalized by our own participation in

a fantasized fascistic group, one that might remind of the weird and ultimately sterile post-postmodernism of Tom McCarthy,² where trauma becomes its own justification, and there is no possibility of freedom from (false) memory.

The true horror of these texts is that there is no escape: narrative itself becomes altered—some would say perverted—into the “same dull round” that we actually, and paradoxically acutely, experience in dream, far from the towers, spires, and inspirations of the dream-romanticization of Coleridge or De Quincey (Blake 1966, p. 97). Imprisonment and the threat of torture, interrogation, and torture are themselves versions of relief from imprisonment. Literature here, whatever literature may be in Kristeva’s or any other formulation, is not liberating: it acts as a constant reminder of the substor(e)y, the base-ment, the undertow, that which drags us back to a set of tales already established and from which there can be no movement, narrative as pure stasis, a totalitarianism of the soul, the “Horror of blank Nought at all” (Coleridge 1993, p. 97).

And this repetition, this inescapability, is nowhere better evidenced than in the current and ongoing fixation with the wars of the twentieth century, although here there needs to be a caveat. Are we condemned to this repetition because we might learn something, or because we are transfixed by the heritage of the millions of unnamed, unnamable dead? Are we looking for escape, or for a re-living—something that might, perhaps, bring the soul or the body back to life, after the manner of vampires and zombies down the ages, who might, in this context, be seen as figures of relief rather than of damnation? Perhaps the problem is that it is impossible to differentiate between the two trajectories; as with the heroine of Ian McEwan’s *Atonement* (2001), it would be impossible to say what effect actions have had on lives—and the fact that one is, might be, or might consider oneself to be a writer of “literature” does not absolve, the mastery of writing only compounds the guilt.

Among recent novels of the horrors of war, and leaving aside the magnificent Pat Barker, Richard Flanagan’s *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* (2013) stands out, on the grounds of intimacy and stamina—although perhaps intimacy and stamina are in fact the staples of enduring torture (as, perhaps, of enduring love). These Australian troops, captured and reduced to struggling, suffering bodies, battling to dig out the Burma Railway under the whips and scorpions of their Japanese masters, become physical horrors to themselves as well as to others, all their organic coherence consigned to a far, forgotten past.

Yet it needs to be considered—and Kristeva does attempt this, albeit rather “strangely,” in her later *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991)—whether in speaking of horror in this language of the other, we are in fact not committing the very crime that lies below all “others”: the crime of stereotyping, which entails the removal of individuality and thus dehumanization. Here it would be tempting to cling to the belief that we can only commit real outrages, visit real horror, upon an unnamed victim; history shows us plenty of examples of this, but it shows us just as many examples of the opposite—the murder of fathers by sons, to take perhaps the most resonant instance of all. But de-individuation is the realm of the zombie, and it increasingly seems that zombies may be every-

where. They certainly are in Max Brooks's *World War Z* (2006), which is hardly a text of horror but interestingly one that both sanitizes horror (nobody gets really frightened, and besides the monsters prove really easy to defeat) and comes up with a remarkably apt (for our times) codification and stereotyping of nation states in terms of their responses to threat. So zombies are, as several critics have shown, only ourselves, and here the stereotyping of North Korea (and, in Oyeyemi's case, partly of Cuba) would need to be turned on its head: horror is not something that can be exiled or abjected to the national other, it is alive and well in the very site of home.

As it is, emblematically, in John Ajvide Lindqvist's *Let the Right One In* (2004), a vampire story shorn of its foreign, aristocratic trappings, and recast, reset into a working-class suburban housing estate. What is perhaps most interesting here is that, for once, the attributes of need and of deprivation are placed together: Count Dracula may have been thirsty, but he was not short of money, neither was he about to queue up to find a job, in Transylvania or in England. In *Let the Right One In*, the horrors have such ordinary associations—bullying, alcoholism, pedophilia, pornography—that we can be surprised that these can consort with the rotting elegance of vampirism. Yet we need to pause here for a moment: can our catalog of everyday horrors have become so extensive—and so normative, so repetitive—as to include pedophilia and pornography? The answer, of course, is yes. One of the true horrors of our age, if we wish to consider this, is that there may be nothing that remains extraordinary.

We can think of this in several different ways. We can view with Kristevan *jouissance* the arrival of an age where perversity becomes the norm, and in many other ways than Kristeva's, there are things to be said for this: the acceptance of varying sexual orientations, the understanding of how crimes and predilections are passed on from parent to child, the awareness of how deprivation breeds violence. And so, arguably, horror on the domestic front no longer arises from transgression of the limits; it arises instead from uncertainty as to what those limits might be.

Amid these doubts and uncertainties, we might find ourselves turning to Carlos Fuentes's vampire novella *Vlad* (2010). For my purposes here, the only point to be mentioned about this wonderful short text is that the Count appears to be blind—in other words, he is disabled, and this is part of the source of his horror. We need again to pause here for a moment. Within horror we can find a constant dialectic between the perfect, unimpaired body, and its damaged, disabled counterpart. This might, of course, be the terrible result of war, and here we could look (if we could bear to) at the horrific impact of the war-wounded down the ages. Or it could be a way of abjecting our fantasized perfect bodies onto those with less abilities of various kinds (I am thinking here of the physical, but the mental offers examples too numerous to mention). There are many theories here, but in the name of my subtitle, "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," I want only to mention how the disabled remind us, unwittingly and unwantedly, of death—not necessarily the death of the soul, but the death of the body and the long afterlife that might succeed that transaction with a disputable mortality.

But we need to ask more deeply about the connections between horror and perversion; between horror and murder; between horror and suffering; and between, to bring on one of Kristeva's most privileged categories, between horror and phobia. Kristeva considers phobia at length, adopting the conventional, if debatable, route of offering yet another addition to the apparently endless sequence of reinterpretations of Freud's case of Little Hans; but perhaps we can say something simpler about phobia. And this is to say that phobia is the irrational: more, it is the acme, the pride, we might even say the narcissism of the irrational. When in the grip of a phobia, the crucial thing is that one cannot be held to account, and more especially one cannot *give* an account: whatever it is, and of course Freud spent many hours trying to tease this out of Little Hans, there remains something that cannot be accommodated, that cannot be "accounted" or "recounted." Some horror; *quelle horreur*.

Patrick Süskind's *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (1985) might help us on our further path into the sources and manifestations of horror, our route into the heart of darkness. Certainly, *Perfume* is a case study in perversion, if by that we mean the simple Sadeian sense by which one sense might be translated into another, or the way in which obsession piles and multiplies, perhaps under the original impetus of something as primitive as obsessive/compulsive disorder. But in *Perfume* Grenouille's apocalypse is described in terms that, necessarily, bear upon horror: as we build toward the cannibalistic climax, and Grenouille's body is disposed of in New Testament fashion among the destitute and the deprived (disguised as they may be), the cannibals are "all a little embarrassed and afraid to look at one another. They had all, whether man or woman, committed a murder or some other despicable crime at one time or another. But to eat a human being? They would never, so they thought, have been capable of anything that horrible" (Süskind 1986, p. 263). "So they thought"; but here we come closer to one of the twisted roots of horror, for horror is always that of which one thinks oneself incapable—whether this means committing the truly horrible upon another human being (and for the moment we need to leave other creatures aside) or whether it means conceiving of deeds done upon our own bodies or souls as truly the stuff of horror. Horror is inconceivable, until it arrives. And then what do we say when we have experienced and survived horror?

The Japanese/Korean writer Kim Sōk-pōm has something to say about that in *The Curious Tale of Mandogi's Ghost* (2010), which concerns the fate of a Buddhist monk who appears to have an endless capacity for bearing suffering. Here we hardly need the term "horror"; what we have instead, repetitively on every page, is the word "ghost"—Mandogi's ghost. Alongside vampires and zombies, then, ghosts—ghosts as figures of horror, although they can be curiously reassuring as well, and this is a possibility the book for a time leaves open. What to make of the victim, the subjected other, who refuses—whether deliberately or not—to respond to the horror daily inflicted on him? One way to put the question would be to ask whether everyone is "ghosted" by those in authority, as Mandogi comes to realize. Speaking of the ghosts in the *Book of the Dead*, he says that

In this country, they can't walk around in the cities during the day. Just like me, sitting in this darkness, they belong to the world of ghosts. Come to think of it, is there anyone in this country that's not a ghost? Well, there's President Syngman Rhee and the officials around him, and then there's the American soldiers. And there's the thieves, like the washed-potato station chief and the captain with the flashy beard had said. But if you aren't a thief, and you aren't in the American army, and you aren't President Syngman Rhee, and you aren't an official, then aren't you kind of like a ghost? (Sök-pöm 2010, p. 95)

Perhaps it does not matter where this novel is set, for in any case this would be the true horror: that apart from presidents, soldiers, officials, and thieves—and Mandogi comes to realize that these are all the same thing—nobody else in the modern state has a claim on reality: they are just ciphers to be pushed around, arranged and rearranged, bullied and cajoled, in the thrall of power and greed, magic numbers on the phantasmal balance sheets of international capitalism.

Perhaps we see this ghosting, this violent removal of the human from the equations of power, at its worst—or one form of the worst—in Toni Morrison, in *The Bluest Eye* (1979), for example. Here the black girl Pecola prays every night for blue eyes because, although she would not articulate it this way, only thus would she be able to pass as one of the privileged few, escape from the chains of deprivation and abuse. But “this soil,” the narrator suggests in the end,

is bad for certain kinds of flowers. Certain seeds it will not nurture, certain fruit it will not bear, and when the land kills of its own volition, we acquiesce and say the victim had no right to live. We are wrong, of course, but it doesn't matter. It's too late. At least on the edge of my town, among the garbage and the sunflowers of my town, it's much, much, much too late. (Morrison 1979, p. 164)

Religions, Kristeva claims—and by this she appears to mean all kinds of belief systems—“purify” the abject, but she is wrong: religions, like all other institutions, multiply and intensify the abject, they allow us to become ghosts and to accept the disembodiment that is one root of horror. “The artistic experience,” Kristeva further claims, is “rooted in the abject it utters and by the same token purifies,” but this is wrong, too, intellectually wrong and ethically wrong: we do not emerge from *The Bluest Eye*, or from most of the other books I have mentioned, with a sense of purification—or if we do, then we are suppressing rage, collaborating in the most horrific of circumstances, we are participating in a false sanctification. Abjection, Kristeva claims, leads us to the sacred. Not so: abjection leads us to submission, to inescapability, eventually to premature burial.

But, Morrison claims, it is too late, much, much too late. *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994) runs the title of a novel by James Kelman, which tells the story of one Sammy, who is blinded under mysterious circumstances while in police custody. The book is relentless, horrifying not merely in the event from which it flows but also in the sense of inevitability that Sammy seems to feel in relation to his fate. The story is told wholly in working-class Glasgow dialect, which led to some controversy before it won the 1994 Booker Prize; but the

point—and one suspects that this was the point on some of the Booker judges' minds, even though they could not come out and say as much—was never the language but rather the force of the extended metaphor of blindness.

The true horror, we might say, is powerlessness. Of course, down the ages Western culture has chosen to privilege the particular powerlessness represented by blindness as the site of extraordinary vision, from at least Homer to Milton. But this is merely a customary ideological inversion, designed to persuade that, as Kristeva keeps saying about Céline, there is beauty to be found among the garbage. What is mostly to be found among garbage, despite Jean Genet and Leonard Cohen,³ is other garbage: abjection does not lead to revelation, it stifles the possibility of revelation and enters into an illimitable circle of deprivation. And that circle is, almost literally, what the blinded Sammy follows as he trudges around Glasgow trying to re-establish his lost bearings. His is not really a story, as it would be far too graceful to accuse him of anything as coherent as having a story. As Kelman himself said, his books do not have beginnings, middles, or ends: they do not need them because, for the people he is portraying, there is no possibility of attaining to a position of overview from which one might construct a narrative. In this world of horror, there is not even any need for extraordinary event, indeed such an event would be irrelevant: "I think," says Kelman, "the most ordinary person's life is fairly dramatic; all you've got to do is follow some people around and look at their existence for 24 hours, and it will be horror. It will just be horror" (McNeill 1989, p. 9). It may or it may not have been in Kelman's mind, but we might be thrown back, thrown down, "abjected" back into Conrad's words in *Heart of Darkness*, or rather the words of the dying Kurtz, "the horror, the horror," that great fount of critical speculation, as though it would one day be possible to ascertain what Kurtz was trying to express. But one thing is certain in the misty haze that is *Heart of Darkness*, and that is that it is a novel about power: about the immense power that Kurtz has held and about his perception that within this power there is a hollowness that renders one object, even as one is exercising what is apparently the greatest authority over others.

And here, on this site of colonialism, ivory and greed, is where one needs to take up again the idea of the global, which underpins the notion of "global horror." Of course, it is possible to read "global horror" in a fairly pedestrian way: namely, as the impact of the spread of culture on horror narratives of various kinds. And one would need to see this in two different but complementary ways. First, there is the spread of dominant Western horror motifs into other parts of the world; and second, there is the resurrection of folk legend and myth from a wide range of places and their reinsertion—in Thailand, for example, or in the Caribbean, or in parts of Africa—into the "horror canon."

But for this account to have value, it would need to be predicated on some acceptance of the term "globalization," and here is where problems occur. In the course of an otherwise peculiar and tendentious book called *After Globalisation* (2013), Eric Cazdyn and Imre Szeman helpfully trace the ways in which the myth of globalization—which they consider now to have been exploded—forms a cover story for power.

Globalisation was a name for the moment; it was also ... an ideological project, one whose function was to make a claim on the character of the present. Globalisation marked, at long last, the conclusion of the project of human social development, the arrival of the world's various constituencies into an accord over the governing principles of political economy. There were some malcontents and disappointed parties (no system can be perfect). But there was also broad agreement over the paths to pursue for social (read: economic) improvement and success, now and forever more. (Cazdyn and Szeman 2013, p. 226)

But the question of what comes *after* globalization is thus occluded because the ways in which the globalization project served as a sophisticated disguise for power and greed could not be admitted. Where horror comes in is in the representation of real states or conditions, of the mind and of societies, where these have been left behind, abjected by the assumption of a common universal goal. It is these voices, it would seem, that horror seeks increasingly to capture as they emerge from the hubbub and chaos of the actual world as we know and experience it, from class disenfranchisement through environmental exploitation to the seemingly endless series of “refugee crises.”

And so, although “powers of horror” may be a telling, an engaging phrase, what needs to be considered as we approach notions of horror is the horror *caused* by power—not merely as a by-product but as a necessary function to abject the other. I need to allude in closing to Katherine Anne Porter’s story, “Pale Horse, Pale Rider” (1939), which gave me the subtitle for this chapter. It takes place during the 1918 flu pandemic, sometimes described as the greatest public health catastrophe in modern history, and it seems to me relevant because it outlines a moment of horror that was quickly forgotten, even as it occasioned unprecedented social trauma: it did not fit with the general logics of improvement and enlightenment. It is thus that we can see how horror comes to remind us of all that gets forgotten, gets pushed under the carpet by the twin gods of globalization and modernity, and this, it seems to me, is where a thorough study of horror fiction should start.

NOTES

1. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, for example, *A Thousand Plateaus*, translated by Brian Massumi (1987).
2. See Tom McCarthy, for example, *Remainder* (2006).
3. See Jean Genet, *Our Lady of the Flowers* (1943), and Leonard Cohen, “Suzanne” (1967).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abraham, Nicolas. 1994. Notes on the Phantom: A Complement to Freud’s Metapsychology. In *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, 171–176. Trans. Nicholas Rand. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Blake, William. 1966. There Is No Natural Religion. In *Complete Writings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, 97–98. London: Oxford University Press.
- Cazdyn, Eric, and Imre Szeman. 2013. *After Globalisation*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. 1993. Limbo. In *Poems*, ed. John Beer, 426. London: Everyman.
- Kafka, Franz. 1996. In the Penal Colony. In *The Metamorphosis and Other Stories*, 53–75. Trans. Stanley Appelbaum. New York: Dover Thrift Editions.
- Kincaid, James. 2002. *Mr Potter*. London: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Kristeva, Julia. 1982. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press.
- McNeill, Kirsty. 1989. Interview with James Kelman. *Chapman* 57: 1–9.
- Morrison, Toni. 1979. *The Bluest Eye*. London: Vintage.
- Sōk-pōm, Kim. 2010. *The Curious Tale of Mandogi's Ghost*. Trans. Cindi L. Textor. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Süskind, Patrick. 1986. *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer*. Trans. John E. Woods. London: Hamish Hamilton.

PART II

Themes of Literary Horror



Vampires: Reflections in a Dark Mirror

Wendy Fall

Vampires are intriguing as figures of horror because they are so much like us and because they so often reflect who we are. The analogy of a dark mirror works well to understand the particular type of horror that vampires evoke because they tend to reflect their contemporary culture's darkest anxieties in a way that is as disconcerting as casting no reflection at all. Vampires are ill-defined as a category of creatures because of this tendency to shift in response to culture, but they center around a constant that was constructed during the nineteenth century: they transgress and blur the distinctions between animals, human beings, and monsters. Despite a number of authors' attempts to reinvent or reframe vampires for modern readers, vampire characters cannot escape their bestial drives, which lead them inevitably away from humanity and toward monstrosity. These shifts, however, are always across indistinct lines, and the vampire's position thus remains deliciously ambivalent, making the vampire a creature of horrific subjectivity. This ability to embody the monstrous, animal, and human in one ever-shifting character makes the vampire a timelessly compelling mirror; a useful literary device for reflecting a culture's darkest fears.

OBSCURED ORIGINS AND SHIFTING CHARACTERISTICS

The etymology of the word "vampire" has long been disputed, but the word mainly refers to beings that have died, come back to life, then spread death among the living (Butler 2010, p. 28). Stories of vampires appear in wildly different forms on six continents; therefore, no single account tracing their origins can claim to be authoritative. It is also difficult to identify any precise rules

W. Fall (✉)
Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI, USA

for defining vampires' roles in stories because there are so many different types, with so many conflicting characteristics. Sir Christopher Frayling identified them as Folkloric Vampires, Fatal Women, Unseen Forces, Byronic vampires, "camp" vampires, and creative forces (Frayling 1991, p. 62). Indeed, vampires are so flexible that they can take on any of these roles and expand them.

Although tales of many types of revenants were common in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, the word "vampire" doesn't enter the historical record until 1725, when an Austrian military officer named Frombald used it in a letter to one of his superiors (Butler 2010, pp. 31–32). Frombald describes local Serbian peasant-soldiers' practice of exhuming dead bodies, staking them, then burning them to ash, explaining that the Serbians did this to prevent the dead from climbing out of their graves to attack the living. The Serbians termed these creatures "vampiri" (Butler 2010, p. 27). It's important to note that Frombald was an outsider, and it's difficult to say for certain that his understanding and retelling of the story was accurate. He was, after all, translating a tale from people of another nationality, language, religion, ethnicity, and class into an official imperial (and rather obsequious) document. After Frombald's report, stories of vampirism proliferated, first in German-speaking scholarly circles, then elsewhere. At least one report of these vampires was published in a pamphlet called *Visum et Repertum*, which was widely translated and distributed (Barber 1988, pp. 15–20). In this way, the idea of the folkloric vampire, likely mangled by the process of cross-cultural transmission, spread into English-speaking communities.

After the notion of the real-life vampire had initially gained traction, it was sustained in the nineteenth century by titillating first-person narratives of horrific vampire sightings in the periodical press. These reports placed vampires in contemporary times and in geographic proximity to readers: the vampire in *Once a Week* devours boys in a school dormitory, and the vampire in Reynolds's *Miscellany* attacks pedestrians along the Hudson River (Anonymous 1865, p. 72; Stirling 1863, p. 175). This type of narrative was printed alongside contemporary fiction in these periodicals, a practice that undoubtedly blurred the boundaries between fiction and reality for readers. Writers like Charlotte Brontë and Charles Dickens muddled the waters further by bringing realism and the uncanny together in the same stories, creating what Susan Wolstenholme described as "the uncanny disjunction between what is ordinary and familiar and what is strange and terrible, to the undoing of their opposition" (Westerholme 1993, p. 58). Poets also helped to obscure the boundary between reality and fantasy where vampires were concerned; for example, Robert Southey's orientalist poem "Thalaba the Destroyer" (1800) includes detailed footnotes in which Southey claims to have studied a number of accounts of vampirism from Continental Europe in preparation for writing his epic (Southey 2011, p. 316). Although he devotes only a few lines of text to the vampire Oneiza's return from the grave, Southey's extensive notes underscore his vampire's real-world connections.

Although details were scarce in popular press accounts of vampire sightings, many finer points about vampires were posited by (mostly) nineteenth-century poets, who invested a great deal of energy to create backstories linking vampires with exotic locations or ancient myths and, in so doing, contributed to the construction of the vampire as urban legend and figure in popular culture. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's "The Bride of Corinth" (2011) was first published in Schiller's *Musen Almanach* in 1797. Goethe constructed his poem by weaving an ancient Greek ghost story across a weave of vampire elements from a Serbo-Croatian folk ballad (Crawford 2016, pp. 46–47). "Bride of Corinth" was translated into English in 1853 by Edgar Alfred Bowring, then again in 1859 by William Edmondstone Aytoun and Theodore Martin. In both of these translations, a young man is ravished and killed by a dead young woman, who confesses:

Nightly from my narrow chamber driven,
Come I to fulfil my destin'd part,
Him to seek to whom my troth was given,
And to draw the life-blood from his heart.
He hath served my will;
More I yet must kill,
For another prey I now depart. (Goethe 2011, p. 44)

This translation emphasizes the vampire's "driven" nature, and the use of the word "prey" sets up the strong dichotomy between the vampire's animal and human characteristics that would take root and flourish in future vampires. Another poem that takes the vampire across humanity's boundaries is Lord Byron's *The Giaour* (1814), in which vampires are clearly creatures of subjectivity who could be construed as being more cursed than their victims. In this poem, the vampire must feed upon his own family, and particularly upon his lovely little daughter, who will plead with him endearingly before her blood can be drunk. Byron positions his vampire as a creature with a pitiable fate:

Wet with thine own best blood shall drip,
Thy gnashing tooth and haggard lip;
Then stalking to thy sullen grave—
Go—and with Gouls and Afrits rave;
Till these in horror shrink away
From spectre more accursed than they! (Byron 1814, pp. 38–39)

Byron informs the reader that there are deep consequences for taking blood as sustenance, characterizing the vampire as a father who loves his daughter and then placing him firmly among the ranks of monsters with the "gouls" and "afrits." Byron follows Southey's lead by including detailed footnotes in *The Giaour*, which strengthen the connections among fictional vampires and their counterparts in real-life sightings (Byron 1814, p. 72). In this way, Byron not only emphasizes the vampire's ability to cross the boundary between monstrosity and humanity but also casts a darker shadow over the increasingly uncertain border between fiction and non-fiction.

FORMATIVE VAMPIRES IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY FICTION

Vampires first appeared in British prose fiction as a result of the famous meeting of writers at Villa Diodati in 1816 (Gelder 1994, p. 26). At the Villa, Lord Byron composed a fragment of a vampire story, which was adapted and expanded by his companion, John Polidori, in his short story, "The Vampyre," in 1819. Although Polidori credits Southey's notes for some aspects of his vampire, it is clear that Ruthven also reflects the author's view of Byron's personality and some influences from Byron's work. Ruthven is obsessed with the maintenance of his elite social connections and consumed by his struggle for control of Aubrey, a wealthy young gentleman. Ruthven is presented by Polidori as a cold, highly controlled creature whose animal urges can be kept in check. When Aubrey seeks to prevent him from harming a young woman, he thwarts him rather easily via social channels:

Aubrey retired; and, immediately writing a note, to say, that from that moment he must decline accompanying his Lordship in the remainder of their proposed tour, he ordered his servant to seek other apartments, and calling upon the mother of the lady, informed her of all he knew, not only with regard to her daughter, but also concerning the character of his Lordship. The assignation was prevented. (Polidori 1997, p. 8)

Here Aubrey has used his friendship and some social maneuvering to prevent a possible vampire attack. This example demonstrates that although he must eventually feed, Ruthven's craving for blood does not compel him to bite. He can exercise self-control and possesses the necessary self-determination to choose not to pursue an intended victim. While Ruthven does eventually gain access to a young woman, he does so by securing her hand in marriage, which is certainly the correct way according to social norms of his time. The subsequent feeding is conducted in subtext; Polidori does not indulge in much description of the event, sufficing it to say, "The guardians hastened to protect Miss Aubrey; but when they arrived, it was too late. Lord Ruthven had disappeared, and Aubrey's sister had glutted the thirst of a VAMPYRE!" (Polidori 1997, p. 24). The cold restraint with which Ruthven controls his passions and protects his social interests distinguishes him from the vampires to follow but also makes him monstrous in a different vein from the revenants of Serbian stories. Ruthven is, at his core, a gentleman aspiring to high station and admiration, and his vampirism is just one facet of his drive for social conquest. Were it not for his eventual bloodsucking, he could be anyone's upper-class neighbor. In this way, Ruthven is a reflection of many class-related fears of Polidori's time: the notion of being inside the correct social circle as an all-important goal, the rejection of the "other," and the terror of discovering that the appearances of one's patron might not match the truth.

Propelled by Polidori's success in reprint, the first full-length vampire novel was James Malcolm Rymer's *Varney the Vampire*. First published as a weekly

serial (also known as a penny dreadful), *Varney* enjoyed a popular run from 1845 to 1847 and subsequent reproduction in serial reprints and two omnibus novel editions. *Varney the Vampire*'s opening installment immediately contradicts many aspects of Polidori's Byronic vampire and reflects a different set of cultural anxieties. Varney's particular type of vampirism is defined in the first chapter by his attack on Flora Bannerworth, in which he is definitely not governed by social rules as Ruthven was, and nothing is left to the imagination. The entire attack is rendered in thick, erotic, violent detail. There are no social maneuvers; in fact, Varney advances from Flora's window to her bed without a single word. When he bites Flora, he evinces none of Ruthven's human affectations or dispassionate self-control. On the contrary, Varney is characterized as a feral snake-like creature, making hissing sounds and mesmerizing Flora with his eyes. This is not an isolated incident; Varney is always depicted as animalistic when the moon has triggered his feeding frenzy. His bloodsucking is like that of a wolf after a fresh kill; people who overhear it describe it as "some animal eating, or sucking some liquid" or "as if some animal was drinking with labour and difficulty" (Rymer 2008, pp. 38, 727). Varney's animalistic qualities are likewise emphasized when he makes wolf-like howling noises. As he is about to bite Flora, he emits "a strange howling cry that was enough to awaken terror in every breast" (Rymer 2008, p. 37). Clearly, Rymer provides ample openings for readers to understand how Varney's animalistic nature contributes to his monstrosity. In many other parts of the plot, however, Varney is convincingly human. He seeks to maintain wealth and position like Ruthven and is capable of the self-reflection necessary to experience guilt and seek expiation. By emphasizing his human side, Rymer delicately positions Varney as a figure of sympathy who was beloved in mass culture, despite his long history as a bloodsucking fiend.

Varney's struggle between animal instinct and human control is complicated by the fact that he is an unnaturally selective predator: he only preys on young women. Embedded not-so-subtly in Rymer's purple prose are troublesome sexual overtones in Varney's predation; he explains that, after his first time sucking the blood of a young girl, "I felt [her blood] dart through my veins like fire, and I was restored. From that moment I found out what was to be my sustenance; it was the blood of the young and the beautiful" (Rymer 2008, p. 753). Varney, then, is not just monstrous because he animalistically craves human blood, but he is also monstrous in human terms because he achieves all of his wealth, power, and status at the expense of innocent young women. Worse, Varney's attack on Flora combines a vampiric attack with sexual lust in appalling ways, as his hypnotic stare causes her to stand transfixed, bosom heaving and limbs trembling, until Varney culminates the act by dragging her onto the bed by her hair, sweeping his horrific eyes over her body in "horrible profanation" and plunging his fangs into her neck (Rymer 2008, p. 38). Varney himself describes his feeding as "midnight orgies," which places them firmly in the category of sexual violence (Rymer 2008, p. 627). Here the vampire's struggle between humanity, animal instinct, and monstrosity is forever changed, as Rymer combines the imagery of lust and the animalistic vampire attack so

that the vampire is not only feared as a predator but also as a ravisher. Once this connection between sexual lust and bloodlust is made, it proves very difficult for future writers to resist. Twisted up in the fearful notion of the sexual predator, the vampire-as-rapist has been reproduced as a metaphor or in the literal sense countless times in vampire stories since *Varney*, becoming a sensational part of the vampire's often hyper-sexualized nature in popular culture.

Rymer also created a new strategy for vampire narratives by encouraging readers to overlook Varney's violence in the course of viewing him sympathetically. In a run of two years, it was easy for readers' memories of Varney's more horrific history to fade. The unreliable narrator's recollections become hazy over time, which helps the reader to forget. Varney's attack on Flora, for example, becomes more and more benign with each mention: in future installments, Varney claims Flora wasn't harmed in the attack (which is false, she almost died), and later he claims never to have bitten Flora at all (he definitely did) (Herr 2008, p. 37). Readers' memories are also subverted by the design of the narrative, as Flora's experience of the attack is suppressed. She is unable to speak immediately following the attack and then mysteriously quiet thereafter. By the time a few chapters have passed, Flora's family has so forgotten about her violation that they allow Varney to move into the house next door without recognizing him (Rymer 2008, p. 87). Meanwhile, Varney's monthly feedings are deemphasized for a time after Flora's attack, whereupon the narrative emphasizes other aspects of his personality: his quest for wealth and his good deeds. This shift away from Varney's feedings to his other activities makes him easier for readers to like. This combination of being an uncontrolled predator and a criminally inclined man who rewrites history to his own liking makes Varney a new kind of monster, who can serve as an allegory for many different types of conquests. Over his long life, he serves as an immense dark mirror reflecting a broad swath of Victorian society's anxieties, covering topics as wide-ranging as imperialism, war, violence against women, sexual violence, street crime, financial security and inheritance, marriage entrapment plots, and theft. By encompassing such a broad set of crisscrossing topics, *Varney* could touch a nerve tapping into almost any reader's fears.

Studies of vampire fiction in the nineteenth century often overlook the importance of *Varney* to the creation of the vampire in the popular imagination. Not only was Varney a success in its initial run, but the story inspired a dramatic adaptation called *Varney the Vampyre* by H. Young, which was produced in London beginning in 1846 and featured T.P. Cooke, the famous actor who had originated the role of Frankenstein's monster on the stage (Anonymous 1864, p. 252). Lloyd continued to reprint *Varney* in penny serials, at least until the production of the British Library's copy, which was printed in 1854. A reporter named John Plummer described seeing a "pert milliner's apprentice, who [invested] her last penny to purchase a copy of 'Varney the Vampire'" at a book stall in Whitechapel in 1862 (Plummer 1862, p. 562). Publication and popularity continued such that *Varney* was still the target of complaints in letters to the editor as late as 1867 (Fletcher 1859, p.

325; Forst 1867 p. 281). Finally, a writer for *The Athenaeum* in 1870 claimed that “the little Family Herald absolutely extinguished ‘Varney the Vampire,’ and other monsters of the sort” (Anonymous 1870, p. 12). Although penny fiction publications of *Varney* may have been “extinguished” for a time, the serial returned in 1970 and 1972 in paperback books, was spoofed by playwright Tim Kelly in 1990, published in eBook form in 1998, partially posted on Project Gutenberg in 2005, and printed in full by Amazon, Floating Press, and Zittaw Press between 2007 and 2012. Although Rymer’s story may not have been the focus of much literary criticism, *Varney* has been read and recycled and adapted countless times, and his influence on other vampire stories is impossible to measure.

A cadre of popular periodical fiction monsters haunted the nineteenth century after *Varney*, among which one gem emerged: Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s 1871 novella *Carmilla*. First published in *The Dark Blue*, a literary magazine, *Carmilla* was then anthologized in Le Fanu’s collection of short stories *In a Glass Darkly* (1872). The title character is a horrifying example of a female vampire who is driven by both bloodlust and sexual desire toward her prey. In daylight, her victim, Laura, describes encountering Carmilla’s all-too-human sexual desires:

Sometimes after an hour of apathy, my strange and beautiful companion would take my hand and hold it with a fond pressure, renewed again and again; blushing softly, gazing in my face with languid and burning eyes, and breathing so fast that her dress rose and fell with the tumultuous respiration. It was like the ardour of a lover; it embarrassed me; it was hateful and yet overpowering; and with gloating eyes she drew me to her, and her hot lips travelled along my cheek in kisses; and she would whisper, almost in sobs, “You are mine, you shall be mine, and you and I are one for ever.” (Le Fanu 2009, p. 23)

Carmilla is able to gain unfettered access to her victim, Laura, because they are both girls of the same age and allowed to fraternize without supervision. In the dark of night, however, Carmilla’s sexual lust is displaced completely by bloodlust, and she takes on a cat-like form to complete her attack and feeding. Part of Carmilla’s particular monstrosity is that she is purely a bloodlusting predator at night but makes convincing advances of love and friendship to gain Laura’s trust during the day. In this way, Carmilla’s character exhibits both an animal’s predatory instinct and a human’s desire for intimacy, while keeping her vampire nature a secret. Her true monstrosity is revealed, however, when it becomes clear she is not the young woman she claims to be, but is instead an ancient vampire named Mircalla, Countess Karnstein. Once the truth is revealed, Carmilla becomes a monster in the mind of Laura’s father and is located in her grave, beheaded, and burned. This story is a locus for exploring and reflecting the reader’s fears about intimacy and about the changing roles of women, who had begun to challenge the traditional patriarchal notions upon which the foundations of society were built.

THE VAMPIRE'S STRUGGLES AGAINST THEIR NINETEENTH-CENTURY MYTHOS

Perhaps the most famous novel to push against the nineteenth century's interventions in the vampire is Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. First published in 1897, *Dracula* is a fin de siècle masterpiece, which toys with genre by imitating other literary forms. Some of the parts of Stoker's story mimic the nineteenth century's periodical press stories of vampire sightings, taking the form of newspaper articles. Other parts of Stoker's narrative are delivered in a series of letters and diary excerpts. *Dracula*'s innovation, however, does not end there. Stoker's update to the vampire's characterization is to separate him from the reader and from the other characters, making the vampire's thoughts and motives inscrutable since he is a very mysterious creature the narrators cannot understand. He does share information about himself, but it's clear that his stories overwhelm Jonathan Harker, who cannot keep up with the vastness of the story except to sum it up like a history of conquest in Europe; Dracula claims his kin "have a right to be proud, for in our veins flows the blood of many brave races who fought as the lion fights, for lordship" (Stoker 1897, p. 27). Although he is sometimes characterized in animal terms, Dracula's bloodlust is more like a warrior's lust for victory than an animal's need for food. His massive memory and experience separates him from humans in the same way that humans are separated from insects; because of Dracula's comparatively immense life span and experience, humans bear little significance to the vampire. This dehumanization of the other characters in Dracula's view is at the center of what makes him terrifying, as is his desire to relocate to England and to make that territory his next conquest. There is not much pretense in Dracula's particular type of dominance: as Nina Auerbach describes it, Dracula and Harker assume a number of relationships with one another, but there is always a void between them, so they never become too close: "Both assume the rigid roles of master and servant, [...] monster and human, making no attempt to bridge the distance. Caste, not kinship, determines their relationship" (Auerbach 1995, p. 70). By maintaining this distance between the Count and the people far beneath him, Stoker creates a vampire whose monstrosity isn't founded in his animal instincts, but rather in his ambivalence toward humanity. For a creature of such an alien attitude toward human beings to invade England would be an unthinkable type of horror for many readers.

Dracula's three unnamed female vampires, however, undermine Stoker's attempts to distance the vampire from human sexuality. Harker describes the females as coquettish, urging each other on, until the fair-haired female seductively approaches him:

The girl went on her knees, and bent over me, simply gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth. (Stoker 1897, p. 36)

This is an ambiguous moment in Stoker's novel, since Dracula storms onto the scene and contemptuously interrupts the females' quasi-pornographic scene before they can complete their feeding on Harker. It is unclear what may have happened if they had been allowed to continue. What's certain, however, is that, for Dracula, this behavior is unacceptable, not because it is immoral or improper, but because it violates his territory: "How dare you cast eyes on him when I had forbidden it? Back, I tell you all! This man belongs to me!" (Stoker 1897, p. 37). As demonstrated in this scene, Stoker's vampires are different types of dark mirrors, reflecting different anxieties depending on the gender of the vampire. While the females reflect fears and repression around sexual desire, Dracula himself reflects *fin de siècle* anxieties around blood (miscegenation, race) and conquest (reverse colonialization). By creating so many vampires and having them reflect so many different anxieties, Stoker invited the diversity among a host of very different vampires who followed in pulp and popular fiction.

Anne Rice makes another overhaul of vampires in her Vampire Chronicles (1976–2016) by imagining them as spectacularly lustful beings who don't engage in human-style sexual congress. In *Interview with The Vampire*, vampires experience an extremely vibrant bloodlust, which is depicted in sensual terms much the way human sexual lust would be, but a vampire's lust can only be sated by blood. As one of Rice's vampires (Louis) describes it, "For vampires, physical love culminates and is satisfied in one thing: the kill" (Rice 1976, p. 28). The fangs and the mouth become the vampire's most sexualized organs, and they (and sometimes their victims) are aroused by the act of feeding. Rice's numerous vampire characters are fully fleshed, reasoning beings who are aware of their lust for blood and must contend with it. Sometimes their human reasoning wins out, and other times they descend into craven bloodlust. For example, in Rice's *The Tale of the Body Thief* (1992), Lestat has made it his personal quest to hunt serial killers, particularly one called the Back Street Strangler (p. 10). Once he catches and kills his prey, however, he isn't satisfied and finds himself also killing the elderly woman he originally meant to protect from the strangler (Rice 1992, p. 22). Although Rice's language around vampire attacks is sensational and feels erotic, she doesn't describe her vampires as engaging in sexual intercourse; they are figurative rapists, but not literal ones. This metaphor is troublesome for Rice, who addresses it directly in *The Tale of the Body Thief* when Lestat becomes human. With his brand-new humanity, one of the first things Lestat does is rape a young woman over her strenuous objections:

She screamed at me to get off of her, and she shoved at me with the heels of her hands. She looked very flushed and beautiful to me suddenly in her heat and rage, and when she nudged me with her knee, I slammed down against her, then drew up only long enough to ram the organ into her, and feel that sweet hot tight envelope of flesh close around me, making me gasp. (Rice 1992, p. 189)

Once Lestat's penetration of a young woman is no longer metaphoric, it's clear that some aspect of his vampire form was the only thing preventing him from sexually brutalizing his prey. With this scene, Rice demystifies the vampire's connection between bloodlust and sexual lust with terrifying results, and it's clear that *The Tale of the Body Thief* specifically reflects the reader's fears about sexual predation and perhaps also about the hyper-sexuality of the vampire bite as it has been portrayed in so many previous novels.

In the world of Charlaine Harris's Southern Vampire Mysteries (2001–2013), vampires have come out to the world and attempted to integrate themselves into human society, an advancement made possible by the invention of a synthetic blood substitute, which can satisfy their need to feed. As long as their thirst is slaked, they can nearly pass as humans by controlling their instincts and refraining from harming anyone. Harris has not, however, eliminated vampires' feeding on humans altogether; people can (and often do) volunteer to be bitten, and vampires' feeding has deeply sensual, intimate overtones, often crossing into the realm of sexuality. When a vampire is starved, however, he can lose control, as happens in *Club Dead* (2003), the third book in the series. Bill Compton is a sympathetic vampire, characterized as a good member of the community, who supports his descendants financially. Sookie knows Bill well: he is her ex-boyfriend and closest neighbor. In *Club Dead*, Sookie has been trapped in the trunk of the car with Bill, who is unconscious (Harris 2003, pp. 220–223). Knowing that he'll be dangerous if he's hungry, Sookie offers Bill a bottle of synthetic blood immediately when he awakens, in hopes that it will keep him from biting her. His instinct kicks in, however, and he proceeds to violently attack her, biting and raping her and nearly killing her. After this attack, *Varney's* strategy of memory revision is powerfully and immediately brought to bear. Bill cannot remember the attack at all, and Sookie suppresses her own experience, refusing to tell anyone because she is afraid of causing other problems. The memory of Sookie's rape is immediately banished, she remains silent about it, and Bill is an important figure in her life for another ten novels. With this incident, Harris's vampire reflects a number of cultural anxieties about sexual violence itself and also about the tendency of victims to remain silent or assume blame in such cases.

Perhaps the most inventive departure from the nineteenth-century vampire is Octavia Butler's 2005 novel, *Fledgling*. For Butler, the term "vampire" is a human word, mistakenly applied to a different species called the Inu. The Inu are tall, pale nocturnal creatures who have genetically adapted to live in symbiosis with humans. They accomplish this by building large family-like groups in which seven or eight humans agree to feed an Inu, and, in return, the symbiont humans are granted a longer-than-human life span. The concept of symbiosis, like Harris's synthetic blood, removes the need for violence from the feeding process, in theory. Also, although the Inu's bloodlust and sexual lust are intertwined, most sexual relations and feedings among the Inu are consensual, at least on the surface. When an Inu is injured, however, just as in Harris's novels, they are overwhelmed by a powerful instinct to kill. This is the case in

the opening chapter of *Fledgling*, when the main Inu character, Shori, awakens in a cave with dire injuries: “I seized the animal. It fought me, tore at me, struggled to escape, but I had it. I clung to it, rode it, found its throat, tasted its blood, smelled its terror. I tore at its throat with my teeth until it collapsed” (Butler 2005, p. 2). Here Shori is blind, so she doesn’t know this was a person, but she devours him. From this passage forward, it’s clear that the Inu’s quasi-utopian ideal of living in symbiont communities with their human food is based on social constructs and rules, not purely on genetics. Without rules and without the care of their symbionts, even the Inu are animals in need of prey, whether consent has been given or not.

The Inu view of consent is also problematic. While some symbionts are born into the community, knowing the consequences and freely choosing to live with the Inu, others, like Shori’s symbiont Wright, are envenomed before they are aware of the implications. The Inu’s bite is like an addictive drug; it not only heals the human but is also a pleasurable intoxicant. This means that, as soon as there is some venom in the human’s veins, their agency to provide or deny consent has been impaired. Shori, for example, surprises her victim, Theodora, by sneaking into her bedroom while she is asleep:

I lay down beside the woman and covered her mouth with my hand as she woke. I held on to her with my other arm and both my legs as she began to struggle. Once I was sure of my hold on her, I bit her neck. She struggled wildly at first, tried to bite me, tried to scream. But after I had fed for a few seconds, she stopped struggling. (Butler 2005, p. 25)

Shori’s Inu venom not only causes Theodora to give up her initial struggle against the bite, but it causes her to crave more contact with Shori as a result of this first bite. Further, once humans have been sufficiently envenomed, the Inu have the ability to give them instructions, which they are psychologically bound to obey, effectively removing their free will. This means that, whether the initial consent was freely given or not, the human symbiont has no ability to revoke consent at a later date. The Inu do have their own justice system of sorts, but it is run by senior Inu who are hundreds of years old and view human symbionts as properly kept in a subservient role. This troublesome type of control mirrors a number of anxieties about a number of topics, ranging from human trafficking, drug addiction, and sexual violence, to authoritarianism.

DARK REFLECTIONS ARE BOTH CONSTANT AND CHANGING

Vampires are capable of sustaining a broad, canon-defying, wildly creative array of fictional frameworks, but there is a reason they are usually found in horror or dark fantasy genres. Despite their constant shifting and adaptability, vampires have been indelibly marked by their nineteenth-century incarnation as creatures torn between animal instincts, human conscience, and monstrosity. Perhaps this is because they always reflect the fears of the culture in which they

were created, and cultural anxieties around the distinctions among humans, animals, and monsters haven't changed overmuch. Nina Auerbach's *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (1995) claims that every generation creates its own version of the vampire, which is the vampire that generation deserves. As Auerbach describes it, "The alacrity with which vampires shape themselves to personal and national moods is an adaptive trait" (Auerbach 1995, p. 5). This theory may also explain how vampires can consistently reflect the particular horrors of their cultural moment, while maintaining the same central concerns that are universal to any period or locale. It's possible that the struggles to overcome animalistic drives and to avoid descending into monstrosity might always be concerns for humanity and will, therefore, always be reflected in the dark mirrors of our vampires.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anonymous. 1864. The Late T.P. Cooke. *The Musical World* 42 (16): 252. London: Duncan Davison & Co.
- . 1865. The Vampire. *Once a Week*, 12, 72–76.
- . 1870. Literature of the People. *The Athenaeum* 2201: 11–14. London: Edward J. Frances. Google Books.
- Auerbach, Nina. 1995. *Our Vampires, Ourselves*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Barber, Paul. 1988. *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. EBSCOhost.
- Butler, Octavia. 2005. *Fledgling*. New York: Grand Central Publishing.
- Butler, Erik. 2010. *Metamorphoses of the Vampire in Literature and Film*. Rochester, NY: Camden House.
- Byron, Lord. 1814. *The Giaour: A Fragment of a Turkish Tale*. 11th ed. London: Thomas Davidson, Whitefriars. The Internet Archive. <https://archive.org/details/giaourfragmentof00byrouoft>.
- Crawford, Heide. 2016. *The Origins of the Literary Vampire*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Fletcher, E. Willis. 1859. Characters from the Drama of Life. *Theatrical Journal* 20 (1035): 325–326. ProQuest British Periodicals.
- Forst, Jacob. 1867. Correspondence. *Ragged School Union Magazine*, December: 281–28. ProQuest British Periodicals.
- Frayling, Christopher. 1991. *Vampyres*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Gelder, Ken. 1994. *Reading the Vampire*. London: Routledge.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. 2011. The Bride of Corinth. In *The Longman Anthology of Gothic Verse*, ed. Caroline Franklin, 38–45. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited. Originally Published in 1797 in *Musen Almanach*.
- Harris, Charlaine. 2003. *Club Dead*. New York: Ace Books.
- Herr, Curt. 2008. Introduction and Notes. In *Varney the Vampire, or, The Feast of Blood*, ed. James Malcolm Rymer, 9–27. Crestline, CA: Zittaw Press.
- Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan. 2009. *Carmilla*, ed. Jamieson Ridenhour. Kansas City, MO: Valancourt Books.
- Polidori, John. 1997. The Vampyre. In *The Vampyre and Other Tales of the Macabre*, ed. Chris Baldick and Robert Morrison, 1–24. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Originally Published in 1819 in *New Monthly Magazine*.

- Plummer, John. 1862. A Vulgar Neighborhood. *The Rose, the Shamrock, and the Thistle*, 1, 561–564.
- Rice, Anne. 1976. *Interview with The Vampire*. New York: Ballantine.
- . 1992. *The Tale of the Body Thief*. New York: Ballantine.
- Rymer, James Malcolm. 2008. *Varney the Vampire or the Feast of the Blood*. Crestline, CA: Zittaw Press. Originally Published by E. Lloyd, London, 1845–1847.
- Southey, Robert. 2011. Thalaba the Destroyer. In *The Longman Anthology of Gothic Verse*, ed. Caroline Franklin, 313–316. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited.
- Stirling, Alice. 1863. The Vampire. *Reynold's Miscellany of Romance, General Literature, Science, and Art*, 172–175, September 5.
- Stoker, Bram. 1897. *Dracula*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap. Internet Archive. <https://archive.org/stream/draculabr00stokuoft>.
- Westerholme, Susan. 1993. *Gothic (Re)Visions: Writing Women as Readers*. Albany: State University of New York Press.



Zombie Fictions

Anya Heise-von der Lippe

It is “a truth universally acknowledged that” zombies permeate almost every aspect of contemporary popular culture and that they are “in want of more brains” (Austen and Grahame-Smith 2009, p. 7). While the medialized undead will frequently devour any part of the human body they can sink their teeth into, this specific craving raises a number of interesting questions about the zombie as a monstrous representative of contemporary consumer culture, as it not only relegates the human to a lower rank in the food chain but also deprives us of our reasoning capacities by effectively creating more “posthumanous” multitudes (Smith et al. 2004). In the early twenty-first century, viral patterns also contain a medial dimension, which represents and emulates their spread (Drezner 2011, p. 15). In this sense, there is no such thing as a single zombie, nor is there a medially unconnected, stand-alone zombie narrative. On a meta-critical level, the zombie is, as Roger Luckhurst points out, a “mass metaphor,” binding together other metaphors into a “dense network of meanings” (Luckhurst 2015, p. 9). From the zombified working masses of the early twentieth century, via George Romero’s mindless mass consumers in *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) to current zombie literature’s explorations of late capitalism and posthuman becomings, zombies have taken on a variety of cultural meanings. In many zombie narratives, the undead seem, however, to lack brains in more than one sense: they are consumers as well as representatives of a need for brains, as their single-minded craving of their preferred nourishment does not suggest particularly well-developed reasoning skills. This lack of intelligence is

A. Heise-von der Lippe (✉)
Universität Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany
Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

commonly linked to a lack of speech, as the pop-cultural zombie tends to articulate itself non-verbally or at least with an extremely limited vocabulary:

I keep saying “brains.”
I remember other words
but I just need one. (Mecum 2008, p. 72)

Ryan Mecum’s *Zombie Haiku* (2008), by comparison, draws attention to a trend in contemporary zombie fiction: a discrepancy between the zombies’ sparse verbal skills—often reduced to moans and groans—and the rich inner monologue of zombie narrators, who reflect on philosophical questions of life and (un)death, their own existence and relationship to the human. Neurologically, this discrepancy between understanding speech and not being able to produce it is known as “Broca’s aphasia” (Verstynen and Voytek 2014, p. 122). Its appearance in zombie narratives is a relatively recent phenomenon—so recent in fact, that Kyle William Bishop, in his seminal *American Zombie Gothic* (2010), could still make an argument against its prevalence in “serious” zombie narratives:

Although some zombie comedies, parodies, and fan films have explored the idea of sentient and even articulate zombies, the mainstream and “serious” horror films, graphic novels, and video games featuring zombies have remained remarkably true to Romero’s original formula. (Bishop 2010, p. 159)

As Bishop also notes, however, “[i]n recent years, [...], these lumbering creatures have become increasingly sympathetic and complex characters in their own rights” (Bishop 2010, p. 189). And Ian Olney’s *Zombie Cinema* (2017) suggests that this humanization indicates a shift in allegiances: rather than read the zombie as an Other, we “see something of ourselves in them that we don’t see in other monsters. It also suggests that they capture who we are not simply as individuals but as a society” (Olney 2017, p. 11). This is, for instance, the case in George Romero’s *Land of the Dead* (2005), which shifts the focus from greedy humans to vengeful zombies. Bishop discusses *Land of the Dead* in this context, but his focus lies on the means filmic narratives use to create possibilities of identification and empathy with these new zombie characters.

It is only in the last decade that the shambling undead seem to have infected fiction to an extent that is comparable with their spread in other media. In a 2010 review of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009), Mark McGurl could still lament that “[c]ritics have been worrying about the death of the novel for decades, and the publication of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is unlikely to change that,” adding that Seth Grahame-Smith’s rewriting drags Jane Austen’s classic “into the pulp at the very bottom of the cultural barrel” (McGurl 2010). Ghoulish imagery aside, McGurl’s observation of a lack of innovation in popular zombie fictions rang true at the time—perhaps with the exception of Max Brooks’s *World War Z*. It is only in the second decade of the new millennium that the horror sub-genre seems to be exploring new ground with the publication of a number of zombie novels and anthologies like *Zombies vs. Unicorns*

(2010), edited by Holly Black and Justine Larbalestier, or *Dead North* (2013), edited by Silvia Moreno-Garcia, to name only a few. In the following, I would like to propose an argument concerning the relatively recent phenomenon of novels focusing on sentient zombies and the zombification of the human. The former facilitate and explore different uses of narrative perspective to create a discrepancy between the traditionally ghoulish outward representation of zombies and their eloquent interior narrative commentary. This representational gap raises a number of interesting questions, as it highlights the liminal position of the undead, shambling along the line between life and death, as well as human and non-human. It also seems to suggest that the zombie is no longer represented as a clearly delineated monstrous “Other,” but has, rather, become an ambiguous posthuman figure which serves to question our humanity.

Three of the five zombie novels this chapter will discuss make use of this kind of posthuman narrative construction—S.G. Browne’s *Breathers* (2009), Isaac Marion’s *Warm Bodies* (2010), and M.R. Carey’s *The Girl with All the Gifts* (2014)—while *World War Z* and Colson Whitehead’s *Zone One* (2011) draw attention to the inhumanity of the human as part of a meta-narrative reflection of the various reactions to a zombie apocalypse. Rather than discuss each of these texts in detail, I will focus on their critical and narratological elements to highlight common concerns of the emerging sub-genre of zombie fictions. While *Warm Bodies*, *World War Z*, and *The Girl with All the Gifts* have spawned popular film adaptations, much of the self-reflexive quality of the zombie novels has been lost in translation from print to audio-visual narrative. *World War Z*’s multiple voices of the zombie apocalypse, for instance, have been conflated into a single narrative strand, focusing on the narrator of the “Introduction” and foregrounding action in the present, rather than retrospective reflection, while also abandoning the novel’s contemplative global focus in favor of a singular US perspective. The film adaptation of *Warm Bodies* has, similarly, eliminated most of the contemplative depth of Marion’s novel in favor of the YA romance plot, which tried to piggyback (with rather mixed results) onto the commercial success of the *Twilight* franchise (Buckley 2013). Taking this critical discrepancy of zombie films and zombie fictions as its starting point, this chapter will focus on the meta-narrative aspects of popular zombie fictions, reading them as cultural texts that have much to say about our contemporary perspective on (what we perceive as) human and its monstrous Others.

As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen argues, “the monstrous body is a cultural body”; it is “an embodiment of a certain cultural moment” (Cohen 1996, p. 4). Zombie fictions reflect contemporary cultural anxieties and desires. They offer subtle possibilities to explore posthuman developments by providing readers with diverse narrative perspectives and by exploring ideas of monstrous becomings. They ask, like Richard Matheson’s genre classic *I am Legend* (1954), which, in spite of its vampiric monsters, influenced Romero’s *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), what it would mean if the human were indeed to become an obsolete category in a world inhabited by posthumans (see Matheson 2007). The sheer profusion of zombie narratives in the early twenty-first century can certainly be read as a

reflection of the cultural significance of horror narratives in addressing these questions not just philosophically but also as cultural “literalizations” (Luckhurst 2015, p. 183).

Autodiegetic narratives from the perspective of the zombie shift the reader’s focus from the typical paradigm of “us” (humans) versus “them” (the zombies) toward a zombie-centered perspective and allow for a contemplation of the complicated position of the human in various contemporary critical paradigms. As Deleuze and Guattari famously suggest in *Anti-Oedipus* (1983), “[t]he only modern myth is the myth of zombies,” which they relate to the conditions of the capitalist work ethics and the insistence on employing swarms of “mortified schizos, good for work, brought back to reason” (Deleuze and Guattari 2013, p. 382). While Deleuze and Guattari’s focus is on diagnosing twentieth-century capitalist societies with schizophrenia, rather than making a point about zombie narratives, their invocation of the zombie myth as the prevalent narrative of contemporary culture still rings true in its focus on the necropolitical aspects of late capitalist societies in which “[t]he law of large numbers always works for death” (Deleuze and Guattari 2013, p. 382). As Rosi Braidotti argues, drawing on Achille Mbembe’s concept of “necropolitics”: “the bodies of the empirical subjects who signify difference (woman/native/earth or natural others) have become the disposable bodies of the global economy” as death is increasingly subjected to biopower and practices of dying are exploited on a global scale in processes of industrial production, waste management, and industrialized warfare (Mbembe 2003, p. 11; Braidotti 2013, p. 111). The zombie is not only an apt metaphor for the dehumanization of these processes, it also presents an ambiguous figure, which is neither a subject nor fully object. It is not (yet) Kristeva’s “cadaver,” the fallen corpse representing “cesspool and death,” but it inhabits a liminal space between life and death, human and non-human, which draws attention to the discursive construction and consequent mutability of such defining categories (Kristeva 1982, p. 3).

Novels like *Warm Bodies* or *Breathers* deliberately employ the zombie perspective to create a non-human (or posthuman) focus, which both humanizes the zombie—endowing a rotting corpse with human reasoning skills—and “domesticate[s]” the monster by rendering it more familiar (Derrida 1995, p. 386). This is not an entirely feasible project, as it remains “hard to love your zombie,” and conscious zombie narratives often evoke this problematic invitation of identification and immersion into an increasingly decomposing body (Botting 2012, p. 19). Narratives of sentient zombies are, however, frequently aware of this difficulty and tend to comment on it. *Breathers*, for instance, ironically suggests that humans, who have not had similar experiences, would not be able to relate: “If you’ve never been in a roomful of zombies eating freshly cooked pieces of human flesh, then you probably wouldn’t understand,” the autodiegetic zombie narrator suggests, or: “If you’ve never been dismembered or crushed or allowed to slowly disintegrate until you turn into chicken soup, then you probably wouldn’t understand” (Browne 2009, pp. 231, 310). These parallel constructions are repeated throughout the novel, seemingly

evoking a sense of relatability, while also making the reader fully aware of what kind of abject experience they are being asked to relate to. This heightens the experience of liminality typical of sentient zombie fictions, but it also draws attention to the discursive construction of sympathies, which tend, as Sherryl Vint argues, to be more and more frequently drawn between abject posthuman zombies and the disenfranchised, laid-off former working classes (see Vint 2013, p. 135).

Warm Bodies goes even further in this project, in creating a rationale for zombie behavior by providing its main character with a (admittedly somewhat hedonistic) reason for craving brains and the means to narratively express it. It does so, however, at the cost of having to establish another radical monstrous “Other”—a group of desiccated-corpse zombies (the “Bonies”) who are more threatening than the recently deceased undead group to which the narrator himself belongs. Using both human and non-human focalizers, *The Girl with All the Gifts* also shifts the threat away from the relatable, posthuman zombies and toward another group of non-rational and, therefore, more threatening monsters—the first-generation “Hungries.” The Hungries are run-of-the-mill zombies focused on human prey: “If they get your scent, they’ll follow you for a hundred miles, and when they catch you, they eat you” (Carey 2014, p. 3). The skeletal Bonies, however, are described as indecipherable, usually occurring in “swarms,” yet oddly attractive to the narrator in their radical, featureless otherness: “I want to crawl out of my skin, escape my ugly, awkward flesh, and be a skeleton, naked and anonymous” (Marion 2010, p. 45). This wish for obliviousness conflicts with the narrator’s craving for brains as a means to relive the human experience, forging a closer connection between human and zombie (albeit at the cost of this specific human’s life): “I go straight for the good part, the part that makes my head light up like a picture tube. I eat the brain and, for about thirty seconds, I have memories” (Marion 2010, p. 7). This connection to the human via the consumption of memory is a driving factor of the novel’s posthuman romance plot as it allows the narrator to become more human and thus move away from the ultimate otherness of the skeletal Bonies. The cannibalistic undertones of this humanization process mirror similar functions in *World War Z* and *Breathers*, which also introduce the possibility of eating human flesh as a liminal act, breaching the boundary between human and zombie. The survivor’s cannibalism in *World War Z* is doubly encoded in the childhood perspective of survivor Jesika Hendricks’s retrospective narrative: “The camp got silent. No more fights, no more shooting. By Christmas Day there was plenty of food,” which only unveils its full meaning in combination with the interviewer’s commentary: “[She holds up what looks like a miniature femur. It has been scraped clean by a knife]” (Brooks 2006, p. 162). While *World War Z* focuses on cannibalism as a sign of dehumanization and cultural breakdown in survivor communities, *Breathers* seems to suggest that the consumption of cooked human constitutes an act of zombie emancipation, which is ultimately justified by the violence of humans toward the undead pariahs as well as to members of their own species:

If you've never raided a fraternity to exact mortal revenge for the immolation of the woman you love, your unborn child, and your best friend, then you probably wouldn't understand.

In the bedroom across the hall, I find a girl passed out with her panties around her ankles and a used condom on the bed next to her.

Honestly, someone should have killed the members of this fraternity a long time ago. (Browne 2009, p. 300)

As Margo Collins and Elson Bond argue, millennial zombies, which incorporate both comedy and threat, "function as monstrous placeholders for potentially dangerous human interactions in an anomic society" (Collins and Bond 2011, p. 187). By invoking cannibalism as the ultimate human taboo, as well as a textual marker of inhumanity, both texts not only draw attention to the parallels between human and zombie, they also invoke cultural connotations of the "zombi's" origin in Afro-Caribbean folklore, and, as Luckhurst notes, a region the Western imagination has historically associated with cannibalism and the monstrous (Luckhurst 2015, p. 49). In this context, the human survivors' turn to cannibalism also reveals the underlying inhumanity of the human and the enactment of human cultural achievements as essentially empty signifiers or "zombie categories" of the post-apocalypse (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002).

World War Z and *Zone One*—in spite of their setup of human protagonists and predominantly unconscious zombies—still explore this human-zombie boundary (and its possible crossings) by inventing liminal species of zombie-humans or human-like zombies. The "Quislings" in *World War Z* are introduced as "the people that went nutballs and started acting like zombies," "even attacking and trying to eat other people" (Brooks 2006, pp. 194, 195). In a post-apocalyptic scenario, this kind of behavior can have serious consequences, as the text suggests: "he almost died anyway. The bastard had so much bacteria in his mouth that it caused a near fatal staph infection" (Brooks 2006, p. 195). Beyond the immediate surface irony of almost dying of a human bite during the zombie apocalypse, the Quisling episode also suggests a structural similarity of human and zombie, which further underlines the text's focus on reading human and zombie as parallel concepts. The humans, for instance, study the zombies as a military enemy—akin to their human enemies—or focus on the features of individual zombies in attack situations:

She was a noob, couldn't have been dead more than a year or so. Her dirty blond hair hung in patches from her tight leathery skin. Her swollen belly puffed through a faded black T-shirt that read G is for GANGSTA. I centered my sight between her shrunken blue eyes [...]. Those scratched-up baby blues were looking right at me when I pulled the trigger. (Brooks 2006, p. 342)

The detailed description of the zombie girl and the fact that the narrator can look her in the eye and pull the trigger point toward different countercurrents

of identification and rejection, which dehumanize the soldier and humanize the zombie. The zombification of the soldiers is further underlined by the description of their shooting as “[s]low, steady, mechanical-like,” mirroring the pace of the approaching undead (Brooks 2006, p. 343). *Zone One* uses a similar strategy to blur the boundaries between human and zombie by introducing the “Stragglers”—the undead frozen in a quintessentially human occupation like sweeping a street crossing or “peer[ing] into the glassed-off guts” of a copy machine (Whitehead 2012, p. 80). By comparison, the zombie Stragglers seem less dangerous to the human protagonists than the human Quislings in *World War Z*, even if their existence poses more of a conceptual riddle:

How did the copy boy, or copy repairman, or toner fetishist end up here? Had he traveled miles, had he been here since Last Night? Had he worked in this office six incarnations ago, when it was an accountant’s or dietitian’s office? The most frightening proposition was that he had no connection to this place, that this fourth-floor office was simply where he broke down. If his presence here was random, then why not an entire world governed by randomness, with all that implied? Solve the Straggler, and you took a nibble out of the pure chaos the world had become. (Whitehead 2012, p. 81)

The metaphorical use of “taking a nibble” foreshadows a later encounter with a suddenly reanimating Straggler—a fortune teller—which heralds the beginning of the end, the symbolic fall of the wall separating Zone One from the surrounding zombie-infested areas. Both *Zone One*’s Stragglers and *World War Z*’s Quislings, thus, serve to blur the boundaries and underline the connections between human and zombie, suggesting that “fear of the monster is really a kind of desire” (Cohen 1996, p. 16). Moreover, both *World War Z* and *Zone One* foreground the importance of narrative frameworks in the creation of these liminal creatures. While the Quislings’ existence hinges on a misreading (or discursive self-representation) of humans as zombies, the game of “Solve the Straggler” suggests a necessary narrative frame for the stationary undead frozen in time. This focus on discursive practices highlights the multifold medial connections of the undead. As Botting argues (with reference to the zoombies in *28 Days Later*), “they are not mechanized automatons, but the singular body of the multitude hooked up to the digital networks of hypermodernity” (Botting 2010, p. 166). Zombies are historically entangled in various media, from their origins in travel narrative (most prominently William Seabrook’s 1929 classic *The Magic Island*) and Hollywood B horror (*White Zombie* 1932) to their literal and metaphorical imbrication in contemporary media. As Jeffrey Mantz argues, the production and consumption processes of consumer electronics mirror “tropes found in narratives of zombie apocalypse”:

Along the radical digital divide that simultaneously connects and separates the Congo from the affluent global north, Congolese miners extract minerals under

physically perilous conditions to fuel a technological revolution that permits its consumers to experience accelerating senses of physical disconnection from both themselves and [sic] others. (Mantz 2013, p. 182)

As Mantz suggests, this disconnect is endemic to digital production processes and goes beyond mere capitalist consumer alienation. Moreover, zombification seems to be not merely a result but a decisive factor of these processes, as the satirical educational game *Phone Story* about the supply chain behind smart-phone production (and its almost sarcastic ban from Apple's App Store for "violence or abuse of children") suggests (Dredge 2011). As such, Mantz's reading of the current situation in the Congo as a "zombie war" (Mantz 2013, p. 177) goes beyond the common use of the zombie as a cultural metaphor. As Sarah Juliet Lauro and Karen Embry argue in their "Zombie Manifesto," "the zombie has become a scientific concept by which we define cognitive processes and states of being, subverted animation, and dormant consciousness" (Lauro and Embry 2008, p. 86). The zombie is a useful metaphor to frame "some of the most puzzling elements of our sociohistorical moment" (Lauro and Embry 2008, p. 86).

Lauro and Embry's "Zombie Manifesto" introduces the idea of reading the zombie, or rather the posthuman "zombii," as a "consciousless being that is a swarm organism, and the only imaginable specter that could really be posthuman" (Lauro and Embry 2008, p. 88). This argument is rooted in an understanding of an "irreconcilable tension between global capitalism and the theoretical school of posthumanism," which suggests a fundamental incapability of imagining a future that is both a continuation of contemporary consumer capitalism *and* posthuman in the sense of moving beyond the problems that this essentially human system is causing both for humanity as a species and the planet as a whole (Lauro and Embry 2008, pp. 86–87). If it is indeed, as Fredric Jameson has argued, "easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism," the zombie presents a number of possibilities to explore this lack of imagination (Jameson 1996, p. xii). Narratives of the zombie apocalypse not only serve as useful metaphors of the destructive effects of exponential growth and mindless, destructive greed, they also allow a shift in perspective. The flexibility of the zombie as a concept allows us to read it both as a metaphor of human greed and as a means of exploring posthuman possibilities or what might come after the breakdown of the essentially growth-oriented narratives of the anthropocene—if anything.

The Girl with All the Gifts seems to foreground such a reading. Carey's novel offers a symbolically charged perspective on an almost clichéd scenario—an apocalyptic viral event of planetary proportions, which turns the first generation of infected into mindless zombies. It is the second generation of posthuman zombie children, which creates a new narrative focus. The zombie virus is a mutated, species-barrier-jumping version of *Ophiocordyceps Unilateralis*, the fungus hijacking ant's brains and turning them into zombies (Money 2016,

p. 108). This construction already suggests a non-human, ecological angle, which is further underlined by the novel's post-apocalyptic meta-commentary about the sustainability of posthumans and the destructive habits of humanity. The novel employs both human and posthuman focalizers—each with their own agenda: a scientist in search of a cure for the zombie virus, a military officer trying to defend the last humans, a teacher, who empathizes with the sentient zombie children she teaches, and a second-generation sentient zombie girl, who, ultimately, offers a posthuman solution to the zombie apocalypse. As the ending suggests, none of these approaches is viable on its own. It is only through an amount of empathy and cooperation that a solution can be reached—but it is empathy for the posthumans which is at stake here, “the second generation” who will “make a new world,” rather than the humans who would “keep killing each other” (Carey 2014, p. 456). In this non-anthropocentric scenario, which is reminiscent of recent critical posthumanist thought on possible ways of dealing with the anthropocene's problems of overpopulation and dwindling planetary resources (see, for instance, Donna Haraway 2016), the human is merely a relic, a useful source of knowledge to be kept alive until the new generation of sentient posthuman zombies have gone from “a capital *A* and a lower case *a*” to “Greek myths and quadratic equations” (Carey 2014, p. 460). Still, the mere fact that the zombies are sentient and able to use language—narrative as well as rational thinking—suggests a continuation of the human in the posthuman as well as a very human-like concept of the posthuman.

Warm Bodies uses a similarly cooperative, narrative-based approach as zombie and human fuse in a healing (romantic) encounter at the end of the novel to become something entirely new:

We smile, because this is how we save the world. We will not let Earth become a tomb, a mass grave spinning through space. We will exhume ourselves. We will fight the curse and break it. We will cry and bleed and lust and love, and we will cure death. We will *be* the cure. Because we *want* it. (Marion 2010, p. 239)

This desire to be alive is set against the zombie's earlier desire to consume life—human life—and experience human memories by eating their brains in what could be read as a thinly veiled criticism of contemporary media consumption as experiencing life by proxy rather than living it oneself. This would certainly be an appropriate subject matter for a text mainly targeted at a Young Adult audience—the main protagonists of the smartphone zombie apocalypse, if medial horror stories about “smombies” mindlessly walking into traffic throughout Asia and Europe are to be believed (Butler 2015). The text's focus on zombie consciousness and the meaning of undeath goes way beyond this narrow reading, however, and this is underlined by the juxtaposition of the narrator's single-minded zombie behavior and complex inner monologue, which create a critical meta-narrative: “There's a chasm between me and the world outside of me. A gap so wide my feelings can't cross it. By the time my screams reach the other side, they have dwindled into groans” (Marion 2010, p. 8).

Neither *Warm Bodies* nor *The Girl with All the Gifts*, it should be noted, posits the zombie as a stand-alone solution to humanity's problematic capitalist exploitation of the planet. Rather, what both texts seem to be suggesting is a sympoiesis, a posthuman "becoming-with" of human and evolved zombie, which is, both directly and indirectly, constructed via the medium of narrative (Haraway 2016, p. 40). The new generation of sentient zombie children in *The Girl with All the Gifts* are, so the text suggests, in need of human guidance by the teacher Helen Justineau. Education and narrative—Greek mythology, no less—are presented as a way out of their destructive zombiedom. The novel, thus, re-introduces a necessity for human consciousness—affect, as well as rational thinking—which seems to be at odds with the text's premise of a biological zombie apocalypse driven by a mind-controlling fungus.

The question remains, what kind of posthumanism it is that the two texts seem to be suggesting. Lauro and Embry's model of the zombii frames the posthuman undead as "[a] subject that [...] is not a subject" (Lauro and Embry 2008, p. 94). Their argument echoes N. Katherine Hayles's observation that to become truly posthuman does not entail a replacement of the human body with technological prostheses (as Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto" ironically argues [see Haraway 2000]) but a necessity to abandon the Enlightenment subject position (Lauro and Embry 2008, p. 95). Similarly, Stefan Herbrechter and Ivan Callus argue,

for a "posthumanist reading" these moments in which humanism is threatened and the posthumanist other is unleashed need to be taken seriously (maybe even "literally") and forced back onto the texts. In fact it is a kind of ethical demand that confronts texts with their own liberal humanist conservatism. The aim is not in any way to "overcome" the human but to challenge its fundamental humanism, including its theoretical and philosophical underpinnings and allies (e.g., anthropocentrism, speciesism, universalism). (Herbrechter and Callus 2008, p. 102)

Herbrechter and Callus's argument suggests a meta-critical approach, which not only takes the text's arguments at face value but might also open up new possibilities to narratively frame posthumanist questions. It is in this sense that *Zone One* and *World War Z* address similar questions as *Warm Bodies* and *The Girl with All the Gifts* about the instability of the human as a category and the inherent inhumane aspects of the tenuous construct that is our concept of the human; and they do so in a manner closely connected with their narrative structure. The multiple oral narratives of *World War Z*, presented in a seemingly documentary fashion, serve a similar purpose of undermining an authoritative narrative of the human and its Others as does the fragmented narrative perspective of *Zone One*'s narrator, nicknamed "Mark Spitz," who questions the humanity of his fellow humans (and the viability of the human as a concept) via the issue of race and the discursive construction of Otherness:

He found it unlikely that Gary was not in ownership of a master list of racial, gender, and religious stereotypes, cross-indexed with corresponding punch lines as well as meta-textual dissection of these punch lines, but he did not press his friend. [...] There was a single Us now, reviling a single Them. Would the old bigotries be reborn as well, when they cleared out this Zone, and the next, and so on, and they were packed together again, tight and suffocating on top of each other? Or was that particular bramble of animosities, fears and envies impossible to re-create? If they could bring back paperwork, Mark Spitz thought, they could certainly reanimate prejudice, parking tickets, and reruns. There were plenty of things in the world that deserved to stay dead, yet they walked. (Whitehead 2012, p. 231)

The fact that this discussion of stereotypes is introduced relatively late in the text along with the narrator's ethnicity (within twenty pages of the ending) underlines rather than diminishes the importance of these questions in the text, as it challenges readers to question their own ingrained stereotypes as they retrospectively review their reading of the protagonist along with their internalized social categories of "Us" and "Them," as Kim Paffenroth suggests (Paffenroth 2011, pp. 18–19).

CONCLUSION

Zombie fictions clearly offer a number of possibilities to explore the zombie's posthuman characteristics, ideas of becoming zombie, providing readers with the zombie's narrative perspective or suggesting that the human may be an obsolete category in a world inhabited by undead posthumans. The critical possibilities of this shift from the human to the posthuman are often negotiated by means of meta-narratives, and they are particularly relevant in the current global political climate, which seems to be not only hell-bent on pursuing neoliberal capitalism to its absolute end, squeezing the last drops of financially exploitable resources out of an already damaged planet, but also shrouds these exploits in layers of fake news and political counter-narratives that seem increasingly hard to disentangle. If the mindless zombie horde is the predominant metaphor to describe the capitalist workforce—zombies are, as Botting argues, "figures of industrial production and mechanical reproduction" (Botting 2010, p. 155)—the sentient, posthuman zombie might herald a more mindful, meta-critical approach. The question remains, however, at what cost such a posthuman zombie state would be achieved. As Vint has argued, "[n]ew and abject posthumans raise anxieties about massification and material collapse that emblemize our current state of neoliberal crisis and biopolitical governance" and what these zombie narratives present is essentially "a future without a future" (Vint 2013, p. 134). Even the zombie protagonists of *Warm Bodies* and *The Girl with All the Gifts* don't seem to go so far as to suggest that being an undead rotting corpse shambling through a post-apocalyptic landscape would be a goal worth achieving—the attraction of temporarily acting like a

zombie during a zombie walk notwithstanding. The novels' more positive endings are entirely facilitated by the sympoiesis of human and zombie, which has a lasting effect on both, turning them into something that is neither fully human subject nor non-human abject, but a posthuman, which seems to be representative of a big question mark typical of contemporary zombie fictions' exploration of pressing cultural questions about the human and its Others.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Austen, Jane, and Seth Grahame-Smith. 2009. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. Philadelphia: Quirk.
- Beck, Ulrich, and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim. 2002. *Individualization*. London: Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446218693.n14>. Accessed May 13, 2017.
- Bishop, Kyle William. 2010. *American Zombie Gothic*. Jefferson: McFarland.
- Black, Holly, and Justine Larbalestier, eds. 2010. *Zombies vs. Unicorns*. New York: Saga.
- Botting, Fred. 2010. *Zombie*. London. In *London Gothic*, ed. Lawrence Philips, 153–171. London: Continuum.
- . 2012. Love Your Zombie. In *The Gothic in Contemporary Literature and Culture*, ed. Justin D. Edwards and Agnieszka Soltyśik Monnet, 19–36. London: Routledge.
- Braidotti, Rosi. 2013. *The Posthuman*. London: Polity.
- Brooks, Max. 2006. *World War Z*. New York: Broadway Books.
- Browne, S.G. 2009. *Breathers*. New York: Broadway Books.
- Buckley, Catherine. 2013. The Heart-Throb Zombie. In *Thinking Dead*, ed. Murali Balaji, 215–226. Plymouth: Lexington.
- Butler, Hannah. 2015. Teens Pick 'Smombie' as Hippest German Word. *The Local*, November 14. <https://www.thelocal.de/20151114/are-you-a-smombie-german-youth-word-2016>. Accessed May 14, 2017.
- Carey, M.R. 2014. *The Girl with All the Gifts*. London: Orbit.
- Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. 1996. *Monster Theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Collins, Margo, and Elson Bond. 2011. 'Off the Page and into Your Brains!': New Millennium Zombies and the Scourge of Hopeful Apocalypses. In *Better off Dead*, ed. Deborah Christie and Sarah Juliet Lauro, 187–204. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Dawn of the Dead*. 1978. Directed by George A. Romero. Beverly Hills, CA: United Artists, 2011, DVD.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. 2013. *Anti-Oedipus*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1995. Passages – From Traumatism to Promise. In *Points... Interviews 1974–1994*, ed. Elisabeth Weber, 372–395. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.
- Dredge, Stuart. 2011. Apple Bans Satirical iPhone Game Phone Story from Its App Store. *The Guardian*, September 14. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/appsblog/2011/sep/14/apple-phone-story-rejection>. Accessed May 13, 2017.
- Drezner, Daniel W. 2011. *Theories of International Politics and Zombies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- The Girl with All the Gifts*. 2016. Directed by Colm McCarthy. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros, 2016, DVD.

- Haraway, Donna. 2000. A Cyborg Manifesto. In *The Cybercultures Reader*, ed. David Bell and Barbara M. Kennedy, 291–324. London: Routledge.
- . 2016. *Staying with the Trouble*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Herbrechter, Stefan, and Ivan Callus. 2008. What Is Posthumanist Reading? *Angelaki* 13 (1): 95–111.
- Jameson, Fredric. 1996. *The Seeds of Time*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kristeva, Julia. 1982. *Powers of Horror*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Land of the Dead*. 2005. Directed by George A. Romero. Universal City, CA: Universal Pictures, 2006, DVD.
- Lauro, Sarah Juliet, and Karen Embry. 2008. A Zombie Manifesto. *Boundary 2* 35 (1): 85–108.
- Luckhurst, Roger. 2015. *Zombies: A Cultural History*. London: Reaktion.
- Mantz, Jeffrey W. 2013. On the Frontlines of the Zombie War in the Congo. In *Monster Culture in the 21st Century*, ed. Marina Levina and Diem-My T. Bui, 177–192. London: Bloomsbury.
- Marion, Isaac. 2010. *Warm Bodies*. London: Vintage.
- Matheson, Richard. 2007. *I Am Legend*. New York: Tor.
- Mbembe, Achille. 2003. Necropolitics. *Public Culture* 15 (1): 11–40.
- McGurl, Mark. 2010. The Zombie Renaissance. *n+1* 9. *Bad Money*. <https://nplusonemag.com/issue-9/reviews/the-zombie-renaissance/>. Accessed May 14, 2017.
- Mecum, Ryan. 2008. *Zombie Haiku*. Cincinnati: HOW.
- Money, Nicholas P. 2016. *Fungi – A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Moreno Garcia, Silvia, ed. 2013. *Dead North – Canadian Zombie Fiction*. Holstein: Exile.
- Night of the Living Dead*. 1968. Directed by George A. Romero. New York, NY: The Walter Reade Organization, 2003, DVD.
- Olney, Ian. 2017. *Zombie Cinema*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Paffenroth, Kim. 2011. Zombies as Internal Fear or Threat. In *Generation Zombie*, ed. Stephanie Boluk and Wylie Lenz, 18–26. Jefferson: McFarland.
- Seabrook, William. 2016. *The Magic Island*. Mineola, NY: Dover.
- Smith, Jason C., Geoff Klock, and Ximena Gallardo. 2004. Posthumanous. *Reconstruction* 4: 3. <http://reconstruction.eserver.org/Issues/043/editorial.htm>. Accessed May 13, 2017.
- Verstynen, Timothy, and Bradley Voytek. 2014. *Do Zombies Dream of Undead Sheep*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Vint, Sherryl. 2013. Abject Posthumanism: Neoliberalism, Biopolitics and Zombies. In *Monster Culture in the 21st Century*, ed. Marina Levina and Diem-My T. Bui, 134–146. London: Bloomsbury.
- Warm Bodies*. 2013. Directed by Jonathan Levine. Santa Monica, CA: Summit Entertainment, 2013, DVD.
- White Zombie*. 1932. Directed by Victor Halperin. Beverly Hills, CA: United Artists, 2009, DVD.
- Whitehead, Colson. 2012. *Zone One*. London: Vintage.
- World War Z*. 2013. Directed by Marc Forster. Los Angeles, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2013, DVD.



“You Don’t Think I’m Like Any Other Boy. That’s Why You’re Afraid”: Haunted/Haunting Children from *The Turn of the Screw* to *Tales of Terror*

Chloé Germaine Buckley

THE CHILD IN HORROR: A HISTORY OF OTHERNESS

Horror literature and film constructs the figure of the child through a set of binary oppositions: innocence and corruption, frightened and frightening, victim and predator, haunted and haunting. In Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), a novel about haunted and haunting children that has spawned numerous literary and filmic offspring, the child is a source of horror because its status in relation to these oppositions is undecidable. Are the orphans corrupt collaborators or innocent victims? In *The Turn of the Screw*, the undecidable nature of the child becomes the sources of its implacable Otherness, spawning the trope of the evil child found in many twentieth- and twenty-first-century horror texts. I want to trace the evolution of the figure of this haunted and haunting child from James’s novel to twenty-first-century horror literature by John Harding (*Florence and Giles*, 2010) and Chris Priestley (*Uncle Montague’s Tales of Terror*, 2009). These recent works reconfigure the representational processes of horror fiction whereby the child has come to be synonymous with Otherness. In their depiction of horrifying children, Harding and Priestley show that corruption and innocence simultaneously coexist despite (and, indeed, as a result of) centuries of the representation and discursive construction of childhood in opposition to adulthood. Moreover, these

C. Germaine Buckley (✉)
Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK

texts construct the child not as an object of Otherness, but as a subject with whom readers are encouraged to identify, a process that questions the separation and opposition upon which constructions of childhood are based.

The Turn of the Screw precipitates horror fiction's fascination with the figure of the child. Though the child played a crucial role in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic literature, it is James's novel that figures the child as horrifyingly Other because of its undecidability.¹ As Nicole Burkholder-Mosco and Wendy Carse summarize, James's children invite two contradictory readings: They are complete innocents and thus become victims (of the ghosts, the governess, or both), or they have been corrupted by the ghosts and thus are their co-conspirators (Burkholder-Mosco and Carse 2005, p. 201). This undecidability regarding the children's nature stems from a "Freudian" reading that has dominated critical responses and reinterpretations of James's novel since 1934.² The Freudian reading posits that the novel is a story of madness. The ghosts, and by extension, the children, are a product of the governess's neuroses. That is, the undecidability of the children's nature (corrupt or innocent) is the effect of an unreliable adult narrator. Since *The Turn of the Screw*, it is this (Freudian) neurotic adult perspective, whether foregrounded or not, that frames representations and critical analysis of the child in much subsequent horror literature and film.

As Virginia Blum notes, both James and Freud write narratives that use "adult mediators to access the child," offering a disturbing figuration that reproduces "the child as a subject of adult fantasy" (Blum 1995, p. 177). Blum notes that James's literary representation of the child offers more ambivalence than Freud's case studies because it suggests that the child might be resistant to adult projections (p. 177). Nonetheless, James's children are constructed within the text, as well as by subsequent criticism founded on Freudian theory, as Other to the governess whose perspective focalizes the narrative. Blum further notes that James inflates the distinctions between adult and child so there is no possibility of a confluence of adult and child perspectives (p. 176). This Freudian separation of adulthood and childhood is salient because, particularly after James, it dominates depictions of children in horror. That is, representations of children in horror are founded on a Freudian narrative, present in case studies such as "The History of an Infantile Neurosis" (popularly known as "Wolf Man") (1917–1919), in which the child returns to haunt the adult subject and is representative of the symptoms of repressed neuroses that must be uncovered and purged (Blum 1995, p. 157).

Jack Clayton's *The Innocents* (1961) emphasizes the Freudian interpretation in its adaptation of James's novel and, in the process, cements an overdetermined representation of innocence that has since dominated representations of the child in horror fiction. Truman Capote's revisions of the film script bear the influence of Edmund Wilson's essay, "The Ambiguity of Henry James," and

Clayton stated that he wanted to emphasize "sustained uncertainty" throughout (Houston 1961, p. 114). However, in Clayton's version, this uncertainty does not only pertain to the existence of the ghosts but to the nature of the children; the film's title poses the word "innocence" as a question. The sound of girlish singing accompanies the opening sequence, emanating from Flora, but the words of the ballad "O Willow, I die" undercut the seeming innocence of the voice, invoking sex and death in its narrative of a maiden abandoned by her lover. Likewise, the white roses that litter the gardens and interiors of Bly house connote innocence as a façade for corruption and decay. As Miss Giddens, the governess, brushes the petals, they fall and crumble. The decaying flowers metonymically double Flora, who figures throughout the film as a prominent icon of overdetermined innocence. Miss Giddens's observation, that Flora "definitely *looks* angelic," draws attention to the recurring theme of the film: innocence is a cover for corruption (Clayton 1961, emphasis added). Acting as a cipher for this idea, Flora visually transforms into a ghost, haunting the corridors and gardens of Bly. She creeps into Miss Giddens's room at night, the floating white curtains merging with her own white dress, representing her as a haunting presence. In this way, *The Innocents* constructs innocence as horrifying and menacing. This reading spreads from Flora herself to objects associated with her: the doll that she places in her bed when she sneaks out at night; the dusty toys that Giddens finds in the attic; Flora's childish drawings and her beloved music box that insistently replays the haunting ballad, "O Willow, I die." Through these objects, childhood innocence becomes associated with a visual and auditory register of horror.

Critical analysis of childhood in literature, film, and culture tends to echo Clayton's insistence that innocence might really be corruption. In his analysis of the role of childhood in *Modernity*, David Punter points out that the attention to innocence inaugurated by Romanticism and perpetuated by the nineteenth-century "cult of the child" simultaneously suggested the idea that innocence could be abused (2007, p. 117). He notes that at the same time as Western culture constructs innocence as potential victimhood, it also perpetuates the idea that "innocence may be either a lie, or, at the very least, viewed as a cover story for a frightening precocity" (p. 119). Indeed, James's novel and Clayton's film both "turn" on this very paradox: that innocence is either innocence abused or mere performance. Although Punter notes the constructedness of any concept of childhood, especially as it has been filtered through late twentieth-century news media, his critical analysis reinforces the binaristic construction of innocence as corruption by concluding with this ominous suggestion of the "frightening precocity" of children. The phrase echoes and accords with horror fiction's insistence that adults should be frightened of children.

James Kincaid's seminal analysis of cultural representations of childhood reveals the problem with the innocence/corruption binary. Kincaid argues that corruption is not what innocence *covers*, but rather that the loud insistence on the innocence and purity of the child in Western modernity has resulted in its own "subversive echo: experience, corruption, exoticism" (1994, pp. 4–5). For

Kincaid, innocence is not anything in itself, only blankness or “vacancy,” which a priori assumes the presence of abuse and/or corruption (p. 13). *The Innocents* reveals the blankness at the heart of innocence. Throughout, Miss Giddens’s obsession centers upon what the children know. Yet, Miles and Flora continue to frustrate her investigation, never fully answering questions, never seeming to lie. The blankness of their responses is a result not only of the plot but also of the film’s production methods. Pamela Franklin, who played Flora, never saw a full script because the production company was keen to protect the child actors from the dark themes of the film. Thus, since Franklin only read the lines necessary for her scenes, her innocence is not an “act.” Flora’s insistence that she does not understand Miss Giddens’s questions is quite true at this level of the script. Nonetheless, the audience is, through Miss Giddens, exhorted to read Flora’s innocence as a mask for evil, the children must be “talking horrors” (Clayton 1961).

The construction of the child in horror is both paradoxical and pathological. Giddens’s desire to protect the children from knowledge encapsulates this paradox because it is bound up in the fear that they already *know* (something unspeakable and corrupt). Likewise, Giddens’s desire to protect and “save” the children is predicated upon her construction of them as innocents, but their salvation is contingent on them revealing that they are not. Miles’s exasperated response to Miss Giddens’s insistence that he reveals what he knows acutely expresses the way that adults construct children from their own paradoxical desires and fears: “What do I know? Or, rather what is it that you want to know?” (Clayton 1961). Karín Lesnik-Oberstein’s work on children’s literature criticism sheds light on the paradox. She argues that cultural and critical attempts to *know* the child as a fixed and stable object are consistently pathological, revealing the paradoxical “use of children as emblems of their own supposed innocence” in literary, media, and critical writing (2000, p. 237). This innocence is not the “innocence of knowledge about sexuality or death; this is precisely what [children] are demonstrated to be already implicated in” (p. 237). Deborah Kerr’s hysterical performance of Miss Giddens in *The Innocents* encapsulates this adult desire for children to guarantee a notion of innocence that is, in fact, predicated on its very opposite, and the Freudian lens of the film further emphasizes that her desire is pathological. Miss Giddens wishes to protect the children from the corruption of sexual knowledge, yet insists that they admit they are already in possession of this knowledge. Moreover, she wants to possess the children—literally clutching Miles until his heart fails—because their innocence constitutes an inviting vacancy, but this desire to possess prompts her fear that the children are already possessed by her predecessors, and so not vacant after all.

The paradoxical pathology revealed in *The Innocents* manifests in horror film through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Where James’s Flora and Miles provoke anxiety through their undecidability, the child in the twentieth and twenty-first century horror film is explicitly murderous. Prominent examples include the psychopathic, pig-tailed killer, Rhoda in *The Bad Seed* (1956);

the deadly extraterrestrial children in the *Village of the Damned* (1960), led by *The Innocents*’s Martin Stephens; demon-possessed Regan in *The Exorcist* (1973); Damien in *The Omen* (1976); the undead and vindictive “Gage-thing” from Stephen King’s *Pet Sematary* (1989); and a series of duplicitous evil “children” in *The Good Son* (1993), *Case 39* (2009), and *The Orphan* (2009). These “children are variously possessed, intrinsically bad or else turn out not to be “children” after all (as in *Orphan*). Whatever their origins, these horror film “children pose a deadly threat to adults, leading Steven Bruhm to declare, “These days, when you leave the theatre after a fright-movie, you can’t go home again [...] because you’re afraid that your child will kill you” (2006, p. 98). For Bruhm, the horror film child “is what happens to the idea of The Child [...] when we invest most heavily in ideas of innocence” (p. 99). Bruhm recognizes the Freudian discourse at large in Western culture that feeds these representations, but, since it is articulated within the framework of psychoanalysis, his analysis does not imagine a cultural structure that positions the child as anything Other to the adult. William Paul offers a slightly different explanation of the evil child in Western horror, focusing on the way that horror turns on the child’s neediness and dependency (1994, p. 264). *The Exorcist*, for example, provides an opportunity for audiences to enjoy the spectacle of the severe punishment of a pre-pubescent girl under the guise of an exorcism (Paul 1994, p. 307). Paul links this spectacle to a deep-seated cultural and psychological ambivalence about the prolonged dependency of children, which figures in horror as monstrous malignancy (pp. 328–329). Such discussions of the child in horror, then, are constrained by a psychoanalytic framework unable to move beyond a construction of childhood as anything other than inimical to adulthood. It is “alien,” “absolute separateness” (Paul 1994, p. 282).

In contemporary horror fiction, the iconography of childhood has become visual shorthand for evoking fear. Hammer Studio’s 2012 adaptation of Susan Hill’s novel, *The Woman in Black* exemplifies this in its depiction of the haunted Eel Marsh House. Although the house is haunted by an adult woman, Jennet Humfrye, it is the paraphernalia of childhood—clockwork toys and porcelain dolls—that provide the auditory and visual tension in a key scene of the film, which brings the protagonist into confrontation with the eponymous ghost. A later Hill novel, *Dolly* (2012), likewise centers the horror upon objects associated with childhood. In this novel, a broken porcelain doll becomes the vessel for childhood malignancy, returning from beyond the grave to haunt two adult protagonists. *Dolly* plays on the uncanniness of dolls in a way that has less to do with the thesis of Freud’s famous essay and more to do with a horror tradition in which the doll functions as a stand in for the blank malevolency of the evil child. *El Orfanato* (2007), a ghost story horror film set in a former orphanage focusing on a mother’s attempts to find her missing child, codes nursery furniture and playground equipment as terrifying. Rows of dormitory beds, an old roundabout, and seemingly innocent childhood games offer up jump shocks as the protagonist, Laura, uncovers a host of child ghosts. The ghosts are victims of adult violence, poisoned by a former warder of the orphanage, but they are

also predatory, luring Laura to follow her own children into death so she can care for them. BBC's recent television series, *The Living and the Dead* (2016), repeats this trope of the malignant child ghost luring an adult protagonist to a premature death. Visually, an old cot and a child's toy boat work as metonyms for the terrifying nature of the child. Seemingly, then, it has proved difficult for horror fiction to move beyond an oppositional construction of the child, to jettison this Freudian construction of the child as implacably Other and threatening to adult subjectivity.

Though adult-produced culture can never hope to inhabit the perspective of the child, there are ways that horror literature and film might chart a route beyond an antagonistic structure that always posits the child as Other to the adult, as an object of fear. That is, I am interested in horror texts that acknowledge the child as a (re)construction of adult perspectives without necessarily performing the Freudian operation of Othering the child as inimical to adult subjectivity. Sue Walsh's discussion of the "Gothic child" (so-called because of its origins in Gothic literature and criticism) suggests that childhood will always be uncanny because it is produced by a perspective that is not its own (2007, p. 189). She insists that critics cannot read the "child" as a real child or as a character because it is not separate from the narration that constitutes it (pp. 184–185). James's *The Turn of the Screw*, along with subsequent horror texts and their criticism, focus on the anxiety induced by the adult desire to find an answer to the question, "What is the child really?" (p. 183). The anxieties and pleasures of horror texts about children circulate around the impossibility of answering that question. Yet, as Walsh's analysis of the Gothic child suggests, to move beyond the antagonistic structure that this chapter has outlined, writers and critics need to pay more attention to the operations of narrative perspective. Critics have not sufficiently addressed this aspect of horror fiction in relation to the child because of the overriding focus on a psychoanalytic anxiety reading. In their novels, Priestley and Harding foreground the problem of narrative perspective and point to possible routes beyond the impasse of childhood otherness without either sentimentalizing the child or claiming impossible knowledge of its "true" nature. In *Florence and Giles* and *Tales of Terror*, the child functions as an unstable narrative position—shifting between subject and object—allowing multiple perspectives to emerge.

THE PROBLEMS OF PERSPECTIVE: *FLORENCE AND GILES* AND *TALES OF TERROR*

Florence and Giles (2010) rewrites *The Turn of the Screw*, focusing on the figure of the girl (renamed Florence) rather than the adult governess. Harding also relocates the events of the book from an English country house to a crumbling pile in upstate New York, evoking a Poe-esque American Gothic in the process. As well as transforming the setting, Harding flips the perceptual frame of *The Turn of the Screw*, narrating events from the point of view of Florence. Harding

also removes the figure of Quint, contracting the antagonistic structure of the original novel to focus on female interrelationships. Florence first pits herself against the young governess, Miss Whittaker, who drowns in the lake, and then against her replacement, Miss Taylor, who Florence believes is a bogeyman come to steal away her hapless brother Giles. Florence is as unreliable a narrator as James's, but rather than the ambiguity coming from whether or not she is seeing ghosts (as in the original), the ambiguity here focuses on Florence's motivations. Does she truly wish to protect Giles or is the bogeyman story a paranoid delusion constructed to give permission to her murderous desires? The story of *Florence and Giles* emerges in the gap between what Florence tells her addressee about events and what those events appear to mean from outside Florence's perspective. Florence describes Miss Taylor as a child-eating bogeyman, possessed by the spirit of the poor Miss Whittaker who "tragicked" upon the lake and has returned to seek revenge. Yet, the text offers multiple clues, which Florence does not correctly interpret, that Miss Taylor is in fact Giles's estranged mother. Her desire to "steal" the boy is real but might well be the sympathetic actions of a woman forcibly separated from her child by a cruel patriarch. Moreover, it becomes clear as the story progresses that Miss Whittaker's death was not accidental, but an act of murder carried out by Florence in revenge for the governess' strictness. The novel's horror thus "turns" on the possibility that Florence is more than simply mistaken about the events she witnesses, influenced by the Gothic novels that she voraciously consumes, but that she is murderously psychopathic.

From the outset, Harding foregrounds Florence's narration as a problem for the reader to negotiate. Her skewed perspective on events, resulting from her isolation and possible psychopathy, manifests as the manipulation of language, characterized by the transformation of nouns into verbs such as "tragicked." This manipulation is not the result of the naivety of a self-taught reader (Florence is forbidden by her "Uncle" from learning to read), but rather a conscious choice. She thinks of herself as a writer in the mold of Shakespeare, whose "free and easy" approach allowed him to say exactly what he wanted: "I intend to Shakespeare a few words of my own" (Harding 2010, p. 10). In her deliberate molding of language, Florence's narration cannot be easily subject to a Freudian reading that would mine it for slips and telling ambiguities. The transformed words are not symptoms, but conscious constructions for the benefit of an addressee whom Florence leads to a particular interpretation. Thus, Harding does not flip the structure of *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Innocents* but incorporates it into his reconfigured narrative that blurs the positions of victim/villain and predator/prey through deliberately dissonant narration.

As well as being self-reflexively difficult, Florence's narration is explicitly intertextual, playing with various positions for herself from Gothic heroine to malignant ghost. She narrates much of the story from within an abandoned "mock gothic" tower, explicitly comparing herself to characters in novels by the Brontës, Anne Radcliffe, and Matthew Lewis. On one hand, she identifies herself as the victim of the narrative, incarcerated at Blithe and beset by dangers.

On the other hand, this Gothic tower is a refuge, and Florence controls the space to her advantage, setting a dangerous trap for Miss Taylor toward the end of the novel. Elsewhere, Florence merges herself with the persecuted young bride of a Gothic “Bluebeard” tale. Florence finds photographs of an unknown woman (likely her own mother) that have been violently defaced. Her first response is one of identification with the woman in the image: “This shivered me in the silent night and I over-my-shouldered, suddenly a feeling of a man standing there with a knife as if to do to me what had been done to the woman in the picture” (Harding 2010, p. 65). Florence is also simultaneously haunted and haunting and identifies herself as a “shivering ghost,” her night walks around the upper levels of the house convincing the serving staff that there is an “evil spectre” haunting Blithe (Harding 2010, p. 45). Though she manipulates the fears of the staff for her own ends, Florence also reports being haunted by the “little girl in the attic above pirouetting across the boards” above her bed (p. 63). This image suggests that Gothic literature’s madwoman in the attic is a role that might also be played by the girl-child and reminds readers that it is through Florence’s incarceration and abandonment by her father that they might read her madness.³ Further intertextual references suggest Florence harbors a nihilistic desire for self-obliteration in the style of Edgar Allan Poe or Emily Dickinson. She imagines that she is “dark inside my grave [...] starting my new existence there, in my new home, in my hole in the ground” (p. 143). However, Florence’s actions as a murderous child later ensure that it is Miss Taylor, and not herself, that meets this particular fate of live burial.

While Florence plays with different roles for herself in a Gothic novel, Harding explicitly conflates her with the adult antagonist in a number of ways. Throughout the novel, she expresses the same desires to protect and possess Giles as the governess character in both *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Innocents*. When Giles goes away to school, Florence states “it was as though I had lost a limb” (Harding 2010, p. 12). Convinced Giles will only be safe at Blithe, Florence affirms, “I would never again let him into the world where he would be evil’d [sic] and tortured, but would utmost me to keep him, here by my side at Blithe, where I could always protect him from all the bad things beyond” (p. 71). Florence’s possessive intentions toward Giles equate her with Miss Taylor, who also appears to wish to save Giles, though from his incarceration at Blithe. Though the antagonism between Florence and Miss Taylor leads readers to suspect that it is Miss Taylor who is the victim, and Florence the aggressor, the adult/child binary is troubled by an accord in their motivations. Rather than positioning Florence as Other to Miss Taylor, the text suggests contiguity as both characters stalk the corridors of Blithe seeking for ways to save the boy.

The antagonism between Miss Taylor and Florence turns on which of them is the bogeyman of the story. Miss Taylor initially fulfills this role, creeping into the children’s room at night and crooning over Giles’s bed “Ah my dear, I could eat you!” (Harding 2010, p. 43). Though Florence perceives Miss Taylor’s actions as threatening, the behavior of a child-eating bogeyman,

readers are free to interpret them as the actions of a protective and desperate mother. Florence's view of Miss Taylor as a hooded bogeyman overlays a further perceptual frame onto the events. This interpretation suggests a childlike innocence manipulated by fairy tales and bogey stories into perceiving maternal affection as terrifyingly cannibalistic. As Marina Warner asserts, eating has long been a major concern of bogeymen tales, and the cannibalistic threat of the bogeyman inspires play between parents and children (Warner 2000, p. 139). Though Warner suggests that such "eating" games are instinctive, Florence misreads Miss Taylor's intentions toward Giles as threatening. Florence's perspective suggests a shift in the nature of the threat expressed by bogeyman tales and so perhaps should not so quickly be dismissed as paranoid fantasy. That is, where traditional bogeymen and fairy tales imagine a threat to the child from outside forces, modern reinventions deploy the bogeyman to explore the "threatened and threatening quality of child rearing and the conflicts between parents and children" (Warner 2000, p. 15). As Paul suggests, this shift to the depiction of an antagonistic relationship between parents and children underlies the ubiquity of the evil child trope in horror film. Instead of endorsing this trope, and so Othering the child as the ultimate Bogey, Harding plays with different perspectives on the bogeyman. The sinister nature of Miss Taylor's hungry desire for Giles recalls Warner's assertion that the idea that it is the child who is the real bogey is a "fallacious and defensive projection [...] It is adults who eat children, if anyone is doing any eating of this sort" (p. 147). Florence's fear of adults is justified given that she has been abandoned, manipulated, and incarcerated by her "Uncle" and the serving staff in his pay at Blithe. Her account of Miss Taylor as a bogeyman also reveals that the deadly antagonism between adult and child, which has become a theme of modern horror, is a matter of perspective. The ending of the novel collapses the difference between Florence and Miss Taylor further. Although Florence appears to triumph, killing Miss Taylor by trapping her in a well, in fact both characters are buried. Miss Taylor lies dead in the well, but Florence remains incarcerated at Blithe, condemning herself and Giles indefinitely.

At the end of the novel, Florence murders Miss Taylor ostensibly to save Giles in a "turn" that literalizes the implicit threat projected onto Flora in *The Innocents*. In Harding's version, there is no doubt: Florence deliberately acts innocent to cover her murderous intentions. Yet, at the same time, the narrative emerges through Florence's perspective, which means the reader cannot fully disavow her as a terrifying object. Florence is callous, perhaps even psychopathic, but she is also maternal and inventive—in many ways an admirable heroine. Harding thus suggests readers both identify with and jettison Florence, extending her the same courtesy that a Freudian reading of James's novel extends to the adult narrator. Perhaps she is mad, but readers must inhabit her subjectivity in order to understand the events. Harding's novel achieves this balancing act between identification and othering by foregrounding the problematic of narrative perspective. In one scene, Florence is repulsed by a photograph of "a small child, a girl [...] tight-lipped and staring fiercely out at the

photographer [...] and the look of her shivered me quite and I thought how I would not like to meet such a child, especially not now, in the dead of night” (Harding 2010, p. 66). Here, Florence sees herself through an adult perspective common in horror literature that constructs the child as Other and threatening. After acknowledging this perspective, the narration shifts to identification: “And then something familiar [sic] about her, about those defiant eyes, and it pennydropped [sic]: this scary child was me” (p. 66). Playing with perspective filtered through Florence’s skewed understanding, the novel asks readers to distance themselves from this “scary” creature but then also suggests that they accept her as their “defiant” heroine. Florence constructs a narrative through Gothic tropes and bogeyman tales in order to shape her addressee’s response, asking them to view not the child but the adult antagonist as Other. At same time, the dissonances in Florence’s account reveal another layer of narration suggesting that Miss Taylor is not a devil after all. However, the dissonance does not provide a vantage point outside the story from which one might judge Florence objectively. Nor is she utterly opaque (as is Flora in *The Innocents*). She is the evil child villain of the story as well as its beleaguered heroine. The difficult and shifting nature of the perceptual narrative frame shifts Harding’s characters into different functional positions and draws attention to mutability of horror tropes that construct adult and child as Other to one another.

Where *Florence and Giles* is adult horror fiction, *Uncle Montague’s Tales of Terror* (2007) is a children’s book by writer and artist, Chris Priestley. In style, the novel approximates Victorian and Edwardian ghost stories, collecting a number of tales reminiscent of the works of M.R. James, J. Sheridan Le Fanu, and Edgar Allan Poe, within a portmanteau frame that recalls the horror anthology films of the mid-twentieth century by American International Pictures and Hammer Horror. Like Harding, Priestley also draws on Jack Clayton’s *The Innocents* in his depiction of frightening children.⁴ Drawing on this range of influences, *Tales of Terror* is unashamedly nostalgic and overtly intertextual, interweaving pastiche and parody with an intention to shock and disturb. The tales include gruesome details of child death at the hands of witches, demons, and other “bogey,” as well as stories of psychopathic child murderers standing callously over the bodies of their dying parents. Priestley’s work offers a counterpoint to Harding, and the other horror texts discussed in this chapter, because it explicitly addresses itself to the *frightened* child figured in children’s fairy tales and “bogeyman” stories, while making full use of the figure of the *frightening* child so popular in adult horror texts. Since the implied reader of this work is a child, *Tales of Terror* effects further shifts in narrative perspective. As the narrative progresses, it becomes difficult to fix the point of view from which the “evil” child is constructed. Should readers consider the evil child a figment of paranoid adult fantasy? Does the storyteller, Uncle Montague, derive pleasure in shocking his nephew with tales of gruesome child death? Are child readers encouraged to gleefully identify with the nasty girls and boys who triumph over ridiculous and sniveling parents? All of these interpretations seem valid at various points throughout the book. In its

mixing of the horror tradition and bogeyman tale, *Tales of Terror* complicates the coding of the child as Other by simultaneously asking its reader to identify with and be repelled by its haunting and haunted child protagonists.

Tales of Terror draws attention to multiple perceptual frames through the layered narration of its framing device. Young Edgar (named after Poe) narrates in the first person, but Uncle Monty (named after James) is the storyteller. Where the listening child is normally the silent addressee of bogeyman tales, here he becomes the primary narrator. This listening child plays an important part in Priestley's deconstruction of child Otherness. Edgar is, in part, a self-consciously adult construction—a child who delights in horror for its own sake. As he walks across the fields to his Uncle's house, he notes "in my childish way, I would turn [...] hoping (or rather perhaps dreading) to catch sight of someone—or something" (Priestley 2007, p. 12). This self-conscious reference to "childish" fears recalls a Romantic perspective on the delights of horror. In his essay on "Witches and Other Night Fears" (1823), Charles Lamb notes that as a child he was "dreadfully alive to nervous terrors," but asserts that though "night-time solitude, and the dark, were my hell [...] I am almost ashamed to say how tame and prosaic my dreams are grown" (1892, p. 141). Lamb associates childish fear with imagination and mourns the waning of its powers in adulthood. Dale Townshend identifies this Romantic construction of the child as a "haunted boyhood," noting its presence in the work of William Wordsworth and others (2008, p. 30). This Romantic sensibility jostles here, though, with the tradition of the "cautionary tale" in which adult bogeymen—such as the witch in the story "Winter Pruning"—punish naughty children for their transgressions. Priestley thus offers two opposing perspectives on the child: the Romantic ideal of the boy with a keen imagination clashes with a Puritanical view of the child in need of strict reform and control.

Edgar's narration suggests that these competing images of the child are adult constructions. Edgar references his own "boyishness" and "childishness," viewing himself from a distance, reminding readers that he is refracted through adult perceptions. Edgar narrates in a knowing tone, his stilted style recalling the stiffness of M.R. James. Indeed, this narrative style does not change between the two narrators. Edgar and Montague sound alike because they are products of the same narrative and so function as doubles of one another. This doubling is both antagonistic and suggestive of mutual recognition as the frame sets up something of a competition between them. Montague taunts his nephew when he hesitates to tell a particular story, stating "It may be a little frightening for you" (Priestley 2007, p. 22). In response, Edgar resists the position of a frightened child by asserting, "I don't mind, Uncle," though admittedly "with more courage" than he feels (p. 22). Montague taunts Edgar into listening to increasingly gruesome tales designed to shock and scare him. Yet, Montague is also desperate for Edgar's company and keen for him to stay by the fireside. Likewise, Edgar performs bravado and skepticism, asserting that he is worried about his Uncle's "ability to distinguish between the real and

the imaginary,” but he is also hungry for the old man’s stories (p. 90). Their friendly competitiveness suggests antagonism, but also complicity. Here, the adult and the child are not separate and Other to one another, but mutually dependent, representing different perceptual positions within the same narrative.

Each of the tales plays with alternative perspectives on the antagonism between child and adult featured in horror fiction. “The Demon Bench End” exposes adult hypocrisy and cruelty when a peddler sells a young boy a cursed bench end. The wooden carving constantly screams out the secrets of everyone the boy meets, goading him to violent acts. In the end, the child becomes a malevolent vessel for the demon’s impulses, but readers are encouraged to see that his victims deserve everything they get. Elsewhere, “The Gilt Frame” evokes Rhoda from *The Bad Seed* in its tale of Christina, a girl who plots to destroy the adults around her, even pushing her own grandmother down the stairs. At the end of the story, Christina claims that a painting of a girl that hangs in the house has exhorted her to the evil deeds. In a final twist, the story reveals that the painting is a mirror. In Christina, Priestley plays with the image of the evil child but never fully endorses it. The gilt-framed mirror foregrounds the gaze that constructs children as Other. Looking into the mirror, Christina constructs herself through the perceptual frame of adult horror, seeing her spiteful malignancy as the image of another child. The use of mirrors and doubles throughout *Tales of Terror* emphasizes the inherently doubled nature of the child as it has been constructed by horror fiction. In “The Path,” a runaway child, Matthew, is chased up a mountainside by a monstrous creature, “clotted with gore [...] a hideous mass of gristle and torn flesh” (p. 212). The creature turns out to be no demon, though, but Matthew’s double, ruined and broken by a fall from the cliff edge. The grisly image of Matthew’s double recalls the physical punishment meted out to Regan in *The Exorcist*. Here, though, the spectacle is not staged for an adult audience repulsed by the child onscreen. Instead, the story urges readers to identify with Matthew’s terror throughout the pursuit. When he finally faces his grotesque double, he is destroyed. The ending suggests the destructive processes of representation at work in the trope of the horrifying child.

In the final installment of the frame narrative, *Tales of Terror* brings together its haunting and haunted children. As Edgar hurries home from his Uncle’s house, a group of children emerge from the shadows of the woods. They are the ghosts from Monty’s stories—children who have killed and children who were killers. They regard Edgar silently, their blank malevolency evocative of the evil child of horror film. Yet, there is also identification and communion. One boy approaches Edgar and “cocks his head quizzically” before being called back by Uncle Montague, who identifies him as Matthew from “The Path.” Montague not only names the child, but also addresses him in an affectionate and proprietary way: “Come along [...] there’s a good lad” (p. 238). This encounter works to efface the Otherness of the children by suggesting

that it belonged to adulthood all along. These are Monty's children. Montague confesses that his past sins against a group of children in his care have resulted in a strange punishment reminiscent of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (1798). Monty must host the ghosts of children; he has become responsible for them and is contaminated by their Otherness: his house "now utterly drenched in strange otherness that contaminates the walls and grounds and the man you see before you" (p. 234). Montague's proprietary and paternal acceptance of the child ghosts suggests their mutual dependency. He states, "I no longer fear my visitors as I once did" (p. 235). The adult narrator accepts responsibility for the child ghosts he has constructed in his tales. Though Edgar and his Uncle part, they remain connected. Indeed, something of Monty's curse passes to Edgar, who echoes Coleridge's lines as he hurries through the woods: "Because he knows, a frightful fiend/Doth close behind him tread" (p. 237). Moreover, there is the lingering suggestion that Edgar will return, to "comfort" his Uncle and to share in his tales, which are not complete without an addressee. *Tales of Terror* thus thoroughly blurs perspectives on its horrifying children so that they are no longer constructed as Other to adulthood, but as explicitly belonging to it.

Variously focalizing their narratives through, and writing for, children, Harding and Priestley rewrite the long-standing horror trope of the child as Other, bringing the opposing sides of its binary configuration together. Through haunted house narratives told from the perspective of a haunted and haunting child, Priestley and Harding ask readers to reconcile the binaries (innocence/corruption, frightened/frightening, victim/aggressor) instigated by James's undecidable orphans in *The Turn of the Screw*. Playing on the tropes and iconography of horror fiction since *The Turn of the Screw*, *Tales of Terror*, and *Florence and Giles* elicit the readers' identification with the horrifying child, suggesting that the child in horror is a product of perspective. They accept they are a narrative construction, belonging to, not Othered from, adulthood. The texts recall comments made by Marina Warner in her insightful lecture on how children are manufactured into monsters through cultural narratives. She reminds us that "the difference of the child from the adult has become a dominant theme in contemporary mythology" (1994, p. 34). Priestley and Harding resist a Romantic mythology, whereby the child's eye view might allow us to shed cynicism and access innocence or a world of imagination, nor do they endorse a monstrous view of the child that is utterly inimical to adult subjectivity (pp. 37, 41). Childhood in these texts is explicitly a production of adult perspectives. As Warner points out, the problems inherent in the mythologizing of childhood originate from "the concept that childhood and adult life are separate when they are in effect inextricably intertwined [...] our children can't be better than we are" (1994, pp. 48, 46). These literary works ask readers to identify with the child, not because the child is an innocent or a victim, but because they are constructed as dependent by the social and cultural system. They are of us, not other to us.

NOTES

1. Margarita Georgieva notes that the twentieth-century trope of the murderous child, for example, is the recent manifestation “of a complex characterisation system that authors developed through the centuries, a system which originates from the founding works of gothic.” *The Gothic Child* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. x–xi.
2. For an in-depth summary and critique of the “Freudian” interpretation of *The Turn of the Screw*, see Shoshana Felman’s “Turning the screw of interpretation,” *Yale French Studies* 55–56 (1977): 94–207. She notes that Edmund Wilson’s 1934 essay, “The Ambiguity of Henry James,” and the suggestion that the novel is a “madness story, a study of a case of neurosis [...] hit the critical scene like a bomb” (p. 97).
3. This reference to the attic adds a further critical frame through which to read Florence, recalling the recuperation of Bertha Mason by postcolonial and feminist analyses of *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1985).
4. Chris Priestley recalls the influence the film has on his writing in an online article, “Gothic Thoughts,” Chris Priestley BlogSpot. 2012: <http://chrispriestley.blogspot.co.uk/2012/10/gothic-thoughts.html>.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Blum, Virginia. 1995. *Hide and Seek: The Child Between Psychoanalysis and Fiction*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Bruhm, Steven. 2006. Nightmare on Sesame Street: Or, the Self-Possessed Child. *Gothic Studies* 8 (2): 98–113.
- Burkholder-Mosco, Nicole, and Wendy Carse. 2005. ‘Wondrous Material to Play On’: Children as Sites of Gothic Liminality in *The Turn of the Screw*, *The Innocents*, and *The Others*. *Studies in the Humanities* 32 (2): 201–220.
- Felman, Shoshana. 1977. Turning the Screw of Interpretation. *Yale French Studies* 55–56: 94–207.
- Georgieva, Margarita. 2013. *The Gothic Child*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Harding, John. 2010. *Florence and Giles*. London: Harper Collins.
- Houston, Penelope. 1961. The Innocents. *Sight and Sound* 30 (3): 114–115.
- The Innocents*. 1961. Directed by Jack Clayton. Twentieth Century Fox.
- Kincaid, James. 1994. *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Lamb, Charles. 1892. *Essays of Elia*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Lesnik-Oberstein, Karín. 2000. The Psychopathology of Everyday Children’s Literature Criticism. *Cultural Critique* 45: 222–242.
- Paul, William. 1994. *Laughing, Screaming: Modern Hollywood Horror and Comedy*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Priestley, Chris. 2007. *Uncle Montague’s Tales of Terror*. London: Bloomsbury.
- . 2012. Gothic Thoughts. *Chris Priestley BlogSpot*. October 19. <http://chrispriestley.blogspot.co.uk/2012/10/gothic-thoughts.html>. Accessed January 30, 2017.
- Punter, David. 2007. *Modernity*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Townshend, Dale. 2008. The Haunted Nursery: 1764–1830. In *The Gothic in Children's Literature: Haunting the Borders*, ed. Anna Jackson, Karen Coats, and Roderick McGillis, 15–38. London: Routledge.
- Walsh, Sue. 2007. Gothic Children. In *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*, ed. Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy, 183–191. London: Routledge.
- Warner, Marina. 1994. *Managing Monsters: Six Myths of Our Time: The 1994 Reith Lectures*. London: Vintage.
- . 2000. *No Go the Bogeyman: Scaring, Lulling, and Making Mock*. London: Vintage.



Discussing Dolls: Horror and the Human Double

Sandra Mills

Eva-Maria Simms asserts that the doll is “a dead body, an inanimate child, an unresponsive, rigid corpse,” an uncanny “other” that occupies that liminal space between life and death (1996, p. 672). As incomplete doubles of human life, objects of external manufacture and operation, they possess a grotesquely dead-alive charm. In light of this eerie nature, their widespread absorption into the horror genre seems almost inevitable. Discussion of “living” dolls inevitably leads to connections with, and a potential much lengthier analysis of, the “human double” within contemporary culture. This is a broader classification, which might include androids, clowns, cyborgs, golems, homunculi, mannequins, mummies, puppets, scarecrows, simulacra, statues, substitute or surrogate humans, twins, and wax figures. For this discussion, analysis will center upon dolls and specifically the utilization of these miniature effigies of the human form for horrific purposes. The literary “living” doll narrative has received scant critical attention in comparison to its visual counterpart. With this in mind, this chapter intends to consider the animate doll’s place in contemporary horror fiction through analysis of the “living” doll motif in British author Ramsey Campbell’s oeuvre.

Campbell has been hailed as “Britain’s most respected living writer of the mode,” by *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, and compared to, among others, Algernon Blackwood and H.P. Lovecraft (Birch 2016). The recipient of a great many awards, his published works, numerous in number, include close to forty novels, over twenty collections of short fiction, and an

S. Mills (✉)
University of Hull, Hull, UK

impressive array of reviews, documentaries, and interviews. Far from becoming complacent, as Xavier Aldana Reyes notes, “the twenty-first century has seen Campbell as active and prolific as ever, and returning to old concerns as well as developing new ones” (2016b, p. 195). The critical praise his fiction has received notwithstanding, he remains less commercially successful than his more mainstream counterparts, such as Clive Barker, James Herbert, Shirley Jackson, Anne Rice, and, of course, Stephen King. Aldana Reyes suggests that this is perhaps partly due to the varied nature of horror readerships, as he argues that “Campbell’s writings are sophisticated and referential, and do not necessarily follow the plotting of more generic fare. For this reason, his work might appeal to a different type of horror reader—one better versed in the history of the genre and less concerned with specific popular trends” (2016b, p. 198).

Analysis of the doll figure certainly necessitates consideration of Sigmund Freud’s “The Uncanny.” His pivotal essay on the subject, published in 1919, remains one of the key tenets of horror criticism, and the intervening century has done little to lessen its pertinence. On the nature of the uncanny, Freud affirms that “there is no doubt that this belongs to the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread,” and yet “the word is not always used in a clearly definable sense ... one would like to know the nature of this common nucleus, which allows us to distinguish the ‘uncanny’ within the field of the frightening” (Freud 2003, p. 123). Gaby Wood acutely summarizes this phenomena as “the feeling that arises when there is an ‘intellectual uncertainty’ about the borderline between the lifeless and the living” (2002, p. xiv). Waxwork figures, artificial dolls, automatons, and the double “in all its nuances and manifestations” are all put forward as uncanny exemplars (Freud 2003, p. 141). Central to Freud’s discussion of the haunted and uncanny qualities of dolls is the work of E.T.A Hoffmann and, as Simms notes, through thorough analysis of this work “Freud examines the production of uncanniness in literature. He explores the psychological structure of the uncanny, which has as its core function a very particular and paradoxical relationship to the repressed: it conceals and reveals it at the same time” (1996, p. 668). This feeling of the uncanny is encompassed within the utilization of lifeless forms in horror literature and film and is often central to their depiction.

An archetype of the Gothic body, an abnormal “other,” the doll is abhuman, a term that Kelly Hurley defines as being “a not-quite-human subject, characterized by its morphic variability, continually in danger of becoming not-itself, becoming other” (2004, pp. 3–4). As part object, part being, a distortion of the norm that disrupts categorization, it exists in between states. As an abhuman being that invokes more than mere revulsion, the doll as *doppelgänger* is an atavistic figure that defies rationality, an uncontrolled, ostensibly monstrous “other,” one ripe for manipulation and incorporation into the horror genre.

The “living” doll is an established figure on our screens: from the bewitching wooden dummies present in *The Great Gabbo* (1929) and *Dead Silence* (2007), to the notorious Chucky of the *Child’s Play* series, and contemporary

interpretations of the devil-doll trope *Annabelle* (2014) and *The Boy* (2016). The sheer profusion of cinematic haunted doll narratives arguably borders on cliché with many of these following the ominous tagline of *Dolls* (1987): “They walk. They talk. They kill.” These simulacra of living beings, these substitutes or supplements for life itself, seem almost tailor-made for visual forms of media. Often their sheer presence, and/or their macabre aesthetic, is enough to provoke a visceral, and/or affective response in the viewer—granting agency or autonomy can render the potential threat farcical.

Similarly, these totemic miniature humans populate horror literature, with writers continuing to capitalize on their eerie nature, creating narratives that transgress bodily borders, where troubled toys come to life. Here ventriloquist dummies, stringed marionettes, and porcelain figures are perpetrators of violent acts, possessed by malevolent forces, products of malfunctioning technology or monstrous beings in their own right. After all, this is a space where the monster thrives and the supernatural prosper, where the apparently living are revealed to be dead and the seemingly inanimate come to life. E.T.A Hoffmann’s “The Sandman” (1816) is one of the earliest examples of the literary “living” doll narrative and details a young man’s, Nathanael, infatuation with an uncannily lifelike wooden doll, Olympia. In Daphne du Maurier’s recently rediscovered short story, “The Doll” (1937), these conventional gender roles are reversed. This macabre tale depicts a young girl’s, Rebecca, infatuation with a mechanical doll, Julio, and is an innovative prediction of the sex doll narrative conceived decades prior to this, now a thriving, cultural phenomena. Macabre dolls also litter the pages of children’s literature. Dare Wright’s unique children’s classic *The Lonely Doll* is haunting in its portrayal of the child-doll relationship. Wright authored and photographed the narrative utilizing her own 1920s felt Lenci doll. She altered the aesthetic of the doll, changing elements to mirror her own and arguably created a more authentic human double. The narrative is an aching mix of absurd and grotesque, filled with scenes of misery, isolation, and punishment. Notable horror narratives that focus on the concept of the “living” doll number almost too many to list, from novels including William Goldman’s *Magic* (1975) and Thomas Tryon’s *Harvest Home* (1973), to short stories including William Richard Matheson’s “The Doll That Does Everything” (1954), Joyce Carol Oates’s “The Doll-Master” (2016), and Gerald Kersh’s “The Extraordinarily Horrible Dummy” (1939); the field is, it seems, positively rife with macabre dolls.

Among this mass of human double horror narratives, the work of Ramsey Campbell is notable: dolls, alongside puppets, mannequins, and similar human-like figures, proliferate his vast opus. As Leigh Blackmore notes, these human doubles are a fitting choice, given that the “grim idiotic forces underpinning the world as we experience it are, more often than not, the basis of his work, and he has effectively used the doll/puppet/mannikin motif to convey the effect of these forces” (2014, p. 37). Campbell’s use of the doll trope is noteworthy and chilling; he draws on the uncanny nature of the doll’s seemingly infinitely malleable form in a calculated and horrifying manner to great effect.

The “living” doll is the central plot device of Campbell’s short story, “Cyril” (1969), where it functions as a projection of both latent (on the part of the female) and emergent (on the part of the male) sexual desires. Similarly, “Lilith’s” (1976) is concerned with the nature of the nonhuman/human relationship and describes in macabre depth one man’s obsession with his sex doll, Lilith, and the horrors that ensue when she takes on a life of her own. An evident embrace of this doll motif is to be found in “Dolls” (1976), which explores the intertwined relationship between fanatical religion, witchcraft, black magic, and voodoo. A more recent addition to this trend is his short story, “Chucky Comes to Liverpool” (2010), which addresses the moral panic that emerged after the *Child’s Play* franchise was linked to the murder of James Bulger in Merseyside in 1993. In his fiction, Campbell utilizes the doll motif as a source of both literal and figurative horror, blurring the boundaries between nonhuman and human monstrosities and, in doing so, successfully highlighting aspects of the uncanny and the macabre inherent in the everyday.

Campbell’s *The Doll Who Ate His Mother* (1976) gained a ringing endorsement from King in his influential study of horror, terror, and the supernatural *Danse Macabre*. This validation from one of the genre’s greats brought Campbell swiftly to the attention of an American audience. In *Danse Macabre*, King affirms that Campbell’s writing is “strange; so uniquely Campbell that it might as well be trademarked,” and he declares that “good horror *writers* are quite rare ... and Campbell is better than just good” (1993, p. 397). Reflecting on Campbell’s first foray into novel writing, King affirmed that he “succeeded in forging something uniquely his own in *The Doll Who Ate His Mother*” (1993, p. 403). Indeed, it is this very something—this distinctive, macabre, and skilful style of prose, present in Campbell’s earliest work and running right through his vast oeuvre—that marks out his work as worthy of further analysis.

Aldana Reyes, in the introduction to his recent survey of the field *Horror: A Literary History*, highlights some commonalities of the genre: “heavily intertextual and referential, often intentionally formulaic, horror texts can be easily identified by the enticing or daring messages that often address the potential reader from the lurid covers of books or from film posters. Horror, in short, tends to propose an entertaining and scary ride” (2016a, p. 8). *The Doll Who Ate His Mother* is the embodiment of this, with a title ostensibly snatched from the front page of a tabloid newspaper and accompanying hauntingly lurid cover art. It is in the fine (and continuing) tradition of unflinchingly garish horror titles—*Night of the Living Dead* (1968), *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), *The Driller Killer* (1979), *The Evil Dead* (1981), *Amateur Porn Star Killer* (2006), *Slaughtered Vomit Dolls* (2006), *Drag Me To Hell* (2009), *I Spit on Your Grave* (2010), *Hobo with a Shotgun* (2011), *The Cabin in the Woods* (2012)—titles without ambiguity or allusion, befitting for a genre marketed on its specific ability to induce fear or disgust.

In *The Doll Who Ate His Mother*, monstrosity is multifaceted, subject to constant change, and the source of imminent threat. The novel’s protagonist, Chris Kelly, is a merciless cannibalistic killer, who masquerades as the victimized Chris

Barrow, and it is this dual persona that ultimately enables him to so successfully manipulate others. He's the metaphorical doll of the novel's lurid title, both a literal and a figurative (ab)human double. From his inception, he is marked as "the maggot inside her. The Devil's child" (Campbell 1988, p. 188). Born with a full set of teeth, he ate his way out of his mother's womb, ripping her open from the inside, this violent act resulting in her inevitable death. Chris's monstrosity is conclusively tied to his parentage; his mother was a member of a satanic cult, whose leader, John Strong, controlled his followers through what they believed to be voodoo doll magic, magic that resulted in abortion, disfigurement, and ultimately murder. Strong's black magic is powerful, allowing him to manipulate those around him at will, utilizing voodoo figures with horrific effect. One such victim of this macabre sorcery is "not alive. Moving.... The witch-doctor could make that happen, with his model.... It would crawl out of wherever it was and come back to her. She'd been dreaming she'd found it writhing along the hall, covered with earth" (Campbell 1988, p. 166).

Befitting its horror credentials, in *The Doll Who Ate His Mother*, the locus of this manifold monstrosity is a decrepit house, specifically a cellar, a space which Gaston Bachelard, in his seminal work *The Poetics of Space*, asserts "is less rapid and less clear.... it is never *definitive*," a fittingly Gothic setting where "darkness prevails both day and night, and even when we are carrying a lighted candle, we see shadows dancing on the dark walls" (Bachelard 1994, p. 19). In a scene reminiscent of Lila Crane's iconic encounter with Norman Bates's "mother" in Robert Bloch's *Psycho* (1959), "the climax of the hunt takes place in the rotting cellar of a slum building marked for demolition, and here Campbell has created one of the dreamiest and most effective sequences in all of modern horror fiction. In its surreal and nightmarish evocation of ancient evil, in the glimpses it gives us of 'absolute power'" (King 1993, p. 401). It is here at the site of Chris's conception that the nonhuman/human monstrosities entwine and where uncanny memorializations to Chris, his mother, and Strong surface as dolls resembling each of them are found among the dirt and decaying ruins. As John Jervis attests, the uncanny potential of these (in)human doubles is only made apparent after "the key distinctions that set in place the modern ontology of the real" have been internalized, those "distinctions between living/dead, organic/inorganic, natural/artificial" (Jervis 2008, p. 19).

Strong's inhuman double is the first to be uncovered, "earth crumbled from the head. In the torchlight she saw the tiny perfect face, smiling contemptuously up at her. The first time she had turned up the face she'd known it was John Strong. He was naked: pale grey, and smooth as an infant.... Had he needed to bury this doll to preserve himself?" (Campbell 1988, p. 264). This macabre form of memorialization posits the doll as sacred, as Strong's humanity, in essence, his very self, is transferred from human body to lifeless object. Clare's response to this discovery is one of abject horror, "she hurled the doll away. It flew from the spade and broke on her torch. Clay limbs fell apart on the mud. The head landed upside-down, smiling" (Campbell 1988, pp. 264–265). Unnervingly, the doll's seemingly vacant face remains "smiling." The inhuman double of Chris's mother is

A doll. A woman. Her face was large, the lips full. The woman was gazing down at herself in appalled panic.... The face gazed down in immobilized panic, trapped in the light; flies bumbled in the hall.... The woman was pregnant. Her belly swelled between her hands, which clawed at the earth. That was all. There was nothing more to see, only a small patch of earth stuck to the doll. But it was dragging Clare down to peer closer, to be certain. It wasn't a patch. The earth had collected in a hole in the belly of the doll: a mouth. (Campbell 1988, p. 266)

Here the terror is tethered to a fixed stage of time, one defined by immobilizing panic. It is a scene marked by notions of incorporation and cannibalism as the mouth, and the infant it belongs to, is a miniature replica of Chris. Chris's discovery of his own monstrous doppelgänger is inherently uncanny:

at the bottom he could see a doll. It was a woman with a swollen belly. A mouth was emerging from the belly. At once he knew it was him in his mother. He couldn't keep his balance on the edge. He was falling toward the doll. He managed to take most of the fall on his left foot, but his right came down on the doll. Beneath his weight he felt the doll sink into the earth. It was taking him down with it. It was dragging him down into his dream, to lie beneath the earth. (Campbell 1988, p. 270)

This encounter with his younger double, one whose entrance into the world is defined by this destructive act and his mother's subsequent death, results in a partial loss of self, as he smashes his uncanny "other" to pieces.

Stephen Neale, in his remarks regarding the specifics of horror, states that, at its core, the genre is not focused upon violence, but on "its conjunction with images and definitions of the monstrous. What defines its specificity with respect to the instances of order and disorder is their articulation across terms provided by categories and definitions of 'the human' and 'the natural'" (1980, p. 21). The "living" doll, as portrayed in Campbell's oeuvre, embodies this monstrosity in its entirety. In *The Doll Who Ate His Mother*, the threat becomes monstrous when the (in)human forces collide. Reflecting on horror narratives of the "living" doll more widely, in literature the doll is neither human nor object, animated by language, concurrently set in a lifeless state. These depictions play directly and strenuously with notions of the uncanny, in particular, the psychical uncertainty that Ernst Jentsch selects as key to such a sensation, "namely, doubt as to whether an apparently living being really is animate and, conversely, doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate" (Jentsch 2008, p. 221). In these narratives replete with images of doubling, violence, and mutilation, the doll is concurrently living entity and lifeless artifact, part human, part object. Whether due to pediophobia, defined by *The Dictionary of Psychology* as a "morbid fear of dolls," or purely an uncanny sense of unease, for many these "living" dolls are the stuff of childhood nightmares; lifeless bodies now animated, suspended between human and inhuman states, inducing fear and characterizing horror (Corsini 2002, p. 703).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aldana Reyes, Xavier. 2016a. Introduction: What, Why and When Is Horror Fiction. In *Horror: A Literary History*, ed. Xavier Aldana Reyes, 7–17. London: The British Library.
- . 2016b. Post-Millennial Horror, 2000–16. In *Horror: A Literary History*, ed. Xavier Aldana Reyes, 189–214. London: The British Library.
- Bachelard, Gaston. 1994. *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places*. Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Birch, Dinah, ed. 2016. *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780192806871.001.0001>.
- Blackmore, Leigh. 2014. ‘A Puppets Parody of Joy’: Dolls, Puppets, and Mannikins as Diabolical Other in Ramsey Campbell. In *Ramsey Campbell: Critical Essays on the Modern Master of Horror*, ed. Gary William Crawford, 23–46. Lanham: Scarecrow Press Inc.
- Campbell, Ramsey. 1988. *The Doll Who Ate His Mother*. London: Arrow Books Limited.
- Corsini, Raymond J., ed. 2002. *The Dictionary of Psychology*. New York: Brunner-Routledge.
- Freud, Sigmund. 2003. *The Uncanny*. Trans. David McLintock. London: Penguin.
- Hurley, Kelly. 2004. *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the Fin De Siècle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jentsch, Ernst. 2008. On the Psychology of the Uncanny. Trans. Roy Sellars. In *Uncanny Modernity: Cultural Theories, Modern Anxieties*, ed. Jo Collins and John Jervis, 216–228. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jervis, John. 2008. Uncanny Presences. In *Uncanny Modernity: Cultural Theories, Modern Anxieties*, ed. Jo Collins and John Jervis, 10–50. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- King, Stephen. 1993. *Danse Macabre*. London: Warner Books.
- Neale, Stephen. 1980. *Genre*. London: British Film Institute.
- Simms, Eva-Maria. 1996. Uncanny Dolls: Images of Death in Rilke and Freud. *New Literary History* 27 (4): 663–677.
- Wood, Gaby. 2002. *Living Dolls: A Magical History of the Quest for Mechanical Life*. London: Faber and Faber Limited.



“They Have Risen Once: They May Rise Again”: Animals in Horror Literature

Bernice M. Murphy

In recent years, the consideration of tropes and themes arising from environmental and ecological anxieties has become an increasingly important area within horror studies. It is an entirely logical development, given that our relationship with the natural world and with the plant and animal species forced to share the planet with us has never been so fraught. It is hardly surprising then, that as Carter Soles and Stephen A. Rust note, “ecohorror has thus far been narrowly defined in popular discourse as those instances in texts when nature strikes back against humans as punishment for environmental disruption. Scholarship to this point has demonstrated that ecohorror motifs are most often found in ‘revenge of nature’ narratives like Steven Spielberg’s iconic film *Jaws* (1975) but may also occur in less overtly ecocritical works” (Rust and Soles 2014, p. 509).

Within the typical “revenge of nature” narrative, there have been some notable recurrent consistencies. There have certainly been storylines in which plant life (as in M. Night Shyamalan’s *The Happening* [2008] or John Wyndham’s *The Day of the Triffids* [1951]) and even Mother Nature/Gaia herself punish humanity (as in the likes of *Take Shelter* [2011], *The Last Winter* [2006] and James Tiptree Jr.’s “The Last Flight of Dr Ain” [1969]). However,

I have greatly benefited from the intellectual generosity of friends and colleagues who recommended numerous animal-centric horror stories that were not previously known to me. The suggestions made by James Rockhill and Darryl Jones were particularly helpful.

B. M. Murphy (✉)
School of English, Trinity College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland

it is much more commonly the case that a singular representative of the animal kingdom—be it a lone creature with a grudge (*Jaws* [1975], *Grizzly* [1976], *The Grey* [2011]) or an entire species (*The Birds* [1963], *The Night of the Lepus* [1972], *The Bay* [2012], *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* [2011])—rejects its previously subordinate role and takes a bite out of humanity.

However, although the role played by animals in ecohorror cinema has been acknowledged, little attention has yet been paid to works of horror *fiction* in which animal antagonists feature. Nor has the broader representation of animals in horror fiction been much considered (although individual texts have of course been discussed with this topic in mind). Yet, as critics working within the growing field of “Animal Studies” have highlighted, animals have always played a huge part in our lives, and the journey toward our present-day conception of modernity was signposted by significant transformations in the relationship between the animal and the human. This included the so-called vanishing of the animal from everyday life famously identified by John Berger (2015).¹ As Katarina Gregersdotter and Nicklas Hållen note in *Animal Horror Cinema: Genre, History and Criticism* (2015), Berger highlighted the fact that for Westerners, many animal species with which we used to live in very close proximity have now been removed from our lives:

Few people ever have to think about the animal that they eat once was. The animals that people do encounter are usually not “wild” animals who behave as such: pets are seen as family members and zoo animals are domesticated and some are trained to perform tricks. However, while we have all but rid the urban and suburban West of animals, we have filled the resulting void with signs that remind us of their absence—though the wild animals themselves are gone, images of animals that invade human culture proliferate. (Gregersdotter et al. 2015, p. 206)

Within horror film and fiction, this animal “invasion” of human culture is often literal. Given that the genre is explicitly characterized by “texts or narratives that aim to generate fear, shock or disgust (or a combination of these), alongside associated emotional states such as dread or suspense,” it is hardly surprising that many of the animals most obviously associated with the genre are those most likely to generate these sensations, and those who most aggressively challenge the sense of human “exceptionalism” and “speciesism” many Animal Studies theorists have identified as a hallmark of our relationship with other sentient lifeforms (Aldana Reyes 2016, p. 7).² However, the relationship between humans and animals in horror fiction is by no means always an antagonistic one.

In thinking about how to effectively survey the role played by animals in horror fiction, I have drawn upon the framework previously established by Gregersdotter et al., who make a useful distinction between “ecohorror” and “animal horror cinema.” While acknowledging that many of the films their contributors discuss can also be categorized as ecohorror (as can some of the stories considered here), they argue that the “animal horror” subgenre “also

comprises films that center on the relation between 'human' and 'animal' as categories unrelated to their places in the ecosystem" (Gregersdotter et al. 2015, p. 4). They also insist that animal horror cinema refers to "films where the portrayed animals retain a resemblance to actual animal species" (Gregersdotter et al. 2015, p. 4).

I have also followed their lead by omitting discussion of the very many scientifically created animal/human hybrids to be found in horror fiction, for examples those seen in late Victorian/early Edwardian texts such as H.G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau* [1896] and William Hope Hodgson's *The House on the Borderlands* (1908), on the grounds that they do not relate to *actual* animal species. These texts also engage with very specific issues related to Darwinian theory, racial anxiety, and theories of "degeneration," which further support the case that they should be discussed separately from narratives in which more "realistic" animals appear.³ Similarly, I also view the trope of the human who transforms into an animal through magical, supernatural, or never fully explained means as its own distinct narrative category. I should also stress that throughout this chapter, I will be using the word "animal" in its very broadest sense, to refer to all non-*human* animal species.⁴

I will begin by outlining some of the most commonly served functions of the animal in horror fiction. I will then consider the ways in which the most commonly depicted animal species—domestic pets, farm animals, birds, vermin (i.e. rats), insects/arachnids, and "others"—are represented and the themes which are most commonly found within these narratives. Finally, I will return to the ecohorror theme with which this chapter began by discussing the ways in which the animal revenge narrative has evolved.

The first major function performed by animals within the horror genre is simple: their presence often provides a means for unpleasant human characters to reveal their despicable true nature. A prime example of this trope can be found in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Black Cat," (1843) in which the gin-soaked narrator gouges out the eye of his beloved pet as a prelude to murdering his spouse. Another abusive husband, the jealous Breton nobleman in Edith Wharton's 1916 canine ghost story "Kerfol," strangles a succession of his unfortunate wife's beloved dogs before receiving a suitably ironic (and fatal) comeuppance.⁵ Similarly, shortly after we are first introduced to future Presidential candidate (and likely instigator of World War III) Greg Stillson in Stephen King's psychic thriller *The Dead Zone* (1979), his profound unsuitability for high public office is confirmed when he kicks a dog to death. The first major sign that the protagonist of Charles Maclean's *The Watcher* (1982) has serious unresolved issues comes when he enters a fugue state and dismembers his beloved Golden Retrievers before wrapping them up in a lavish box and presenting them to his wife for her birthday. Animal abuse, as in all of these instances, is always a precursor to even greater transgressions, and, like bedwetting and arson, also provides authors with a handy shorthand means of establishing that a character has sadistic and/or psychopathic tendencies.

The omens are particularly grim when the individual who engages in acts of animal cruelty has not yet become an adult. Pruitt, the Satan-worshipping brat in Jane Rice's 1942 tale "The Idol of the Flies" happily kills small animals until he himself is fatally punished by the dark forces he has foolishly meddled with (understandably, the local wildlife comes out in force to see him get his come-uppance). Anthony, the immensely powerful psychic youngster who terrorizes an entire community in Jerome Bixby's "It's a *Good Life*" (1953), does terrible things to both rats and people and then sends their mangled corpses to the local cornfield. It doesn't take the homicidally precocious 12-year-old Rhoda Penmark long to graduate from pushing an unwanted puppy out a window to shoving an old lady down the stairs in William March's *The Bad Seed* (1954). Cat-killing by a dangerously disturbed young boy forms a crucial plot point in Thomas Tyron's *The Other* (1971).⁶ The apparently innate psychopathy of the teen mass murderer in Lionel Shriver's misanthropic bestseller *We Need to Talk About Kevin* (2003) is underlined when he grinds up the preposterously cute "elephant shrew" belonging to his doomed little sister in the garbage disposal chute. Another homicidally off-kilter teenager, "Frank," in Iain Banks's *The Wasp Factory* (1984) blows up rabbits, builds elaborate totems out of animal remains, and constructs elaborate wasp-killing devices.

Conversely, as in popular culture more generally, protagonists who display compassion, loyalty, and love toward animals display other noble qualities: after all, Hollywood producers are often said to be looking for the "save the cat" moment that will underline the unselfish heroism of their lead.⁷ However, in horror fiction, devotion to a particular animal or species of animal is usually only seen as a benign quality when the creature concerned is a conventional pet, such as a cat, a dog, or a bird. An all-consuming interest in the more unusual, fearsome, or less conventionally "cute" representatives of the animal kingdom is usually, as in "The Idol of the Flies," seen as a sign of potentially homicidal deviancy or can otherwise have deeply unpleasant results, as in Patricia Highsmith's stomach-churning cautionary tale about the peril of neglecting one's pets, "The Snail-Watcher" (1970).

Of course, non-human animals are not only killed for *overtly* sadistic purposes. As Tom Regan observes, "The closest daily contact most people in the Western world have with nonhuman animals consists in eating them" (2010, p. 13). He continues: "Whatever rearing methods are employed, animals raised for food are killed. And this fact gives rise to a basic moral question: do we do anything wrong when we kill animals, not because eating them is necessary for our survival or good health, but because we enjoy how they taste?" (2010, p. 13). In horror fiction (and film), the utilitarianism and emotional detachment associated with the business of rearing animals for slaughter is, therefore, frequently connected with characters who enact this same kind of behavior upon other humans. For instance, the killing of local canines so that their remains can be rendered into a valuable medicine is but a precursor to the wholesale slaughter of foundling infants in Ambrose Bierce's 1911 satire "Oil of Dog." The already fragile mental equilibrium of Francie Brady, the

young narrator of Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* (1992) is further destabilized when he reluctantly kills a doe-eyed piglet in order to secure a job at the local slaughterhouse. Typically, it isn't long before he is violently dispatching his nemesis, an unfortunate local housewife, with the same bolt gun he used on the pig.⁸

Even though the novel features an explicitly urban setting, Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991) foregrounds this connection when homicidal yuppie Patrick Bateman picks up one of his soon-to-be victims, a teenage sex worker, in front of an old warehouse with the words MEAT painted in "four-foot-tall red block letters" painted on the side (Ellis 1991, p. 168). Michel Faber's 2000 science fiction novel *Under the Skin* (which has strong horror elements) explicitly connects the capture and slaughter of humans for the delectation of aristocratic alien gourmands to the cruelty toward both workers and animals inherent in our own practice of factory farming. Michael Stokoe's *Cows* (1997) and Joseph DeLacey's gruesome dystopian satire *Meat* (2008) explore broadly similar themes: once again, the slaughter of animal livestock is explicitly related to the murder of humans. More recently, Gillian Flynn's *Sharp Objects* (2006) highlights the relationship between industrialized animal slaughter (troubled heroine Camille's mother is the owner of the local hog-processing plant) and the dehumanizing treatment of women by society in general.

This liminal space between the human and the animal is one of the major recurrent themes of the backwoods horror film, in which the ultimate act of brutality, as in the likes of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974) and *Motel Hell* (1980) always involves treating human victims *exactly* like non-human animals bred for slaughter (in both movies, this tendency is followed to a logical conclusion, in that the victims are turned into tasty meat products then sold for human consumption). Even in backwoods horror narratives in which cannibalism does *not* feature, human victims are frequently subjected to dehumanizing and degrading treatment that essentially turns them into "meat." For instance, the most infamous line to come out of the film version of *Deliverance* is "Squeal like a pig!" and both James Dickey's 1970 source novel and the 1972 film adaptation climax with a tense cat-and-mouse scene in which the brutal backwoods aggressors are dispatched with arrows originally intended for deer.

The omens are also seldom good when a character in horror fiction has a hobby which involves manipulating the bodily remains of dead animals. Although Norman Bates can't hunt because "Mother doesn't want me to handle firearms," his admission that he is, however, a keen taxidermist provides a major clue as to the real fate of his domineering parent (and her corpse) in Robert Bloch's *Psycho* (1959, p. 26). A penchant for animal taxidermy is also an indication of murderous tendencies in Roald Dahl's "The Landlady" (1959). However, the tables are for once turned on a callous taxidermist in Nigel Kneale's oft-anthologized revenge story "The Pond" (1949), in which, as in "The Idol of the Flies," the local amphibian population finally gets their own back.

John Fowles's debut novel *The Collector* (1963), like *Psycho*, posits a clear connection between men with pastimes that revolve around the preservation of dead animals and the tendency to engage in a very literal objectification of women. His *nouveau riche* protagonist Fred Clegg is a keen amateur lepidopterist who turns his fantasy of "wooing" the beautiful girl of his dreams into a reality when he wins the pools and subsequently imprisons her in the cellar of his fine new home. His victim's tragic fate is foreshadowed from the outset by Clegg's clear preference for dead, rather than living, creatures of beauty.

Jame Gumb's fascination with breeding the "death's head moth" in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988) obviously owes a major debt to the hobbies of his British predecessor. Indeed, Harris's deeply misogynistic serial killer is essentially Fred Clegg kicked up a notch and cross-referenced with real-life murderer Ed Gein. Gein infamously strung up the headless body of his final victim in his barn like a deer carcass. His brutal dehumanization of his victims and obvious disregard for the sanctity of human remains would have a massive influence upon late twentieth-century American horror cinema. As Cary Wolfe and Jonathan Elmer observe of the 1990 film adaptation of Thomas Harris's *The Silence of the Lambs* (one of several important horror movies directly influenced by the Gein case), Gumb's treatment of the young women he kidnaps has clear parallels with the management of animal livestock (2003, p. 103). As they further note, this parallel between the objectification of women and the process of rearing and killing animals for their flesh is explicitly articulated by feminist thinker Carol J. Adams in *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990) (Wolfe 2003, pp. 104–105). Indeed, for Adams, sexual violence against women and meat eating are "intertwined oppressions" which further underline her contention that the objectification and "consumption" of both women and animals arises from the same conditions of patriarchal culture and authority (Adams 2015, pp. 25, 27).

Another major function performed by animals in horror fiction lies in the fact that, like neurotic women and young children, they serve as early-warning alarms for the presence of the supernatural. As Dorothy Scarborough notes in *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction* (1917): "Animals are supposed to be peculiarly sensitive to ghostly impressions, more so than men, and the appearance of a specter is often first announced by the extreme terror of some household pet, or other animal. Gothic dogs have very keen noses and howl lugubriously when an apparition appears" (1917, p. 29).

As in cinematic horror, in haunted house narratives in particular, the family dog is, therefore, often the first to sense that something about the family's new abode is not quite right. For instance, one of the first signs of trouble in Jay Anson's *The Amityville Horror* (1977) comes when the Lutz family dog, Harry, begins to behave strangely. The fact that he subsequently has a stomach upset is later cited as further evidence of paranormal malfeasance (throughout the book, gastrointestinal distress is taken as a sure-fire indication of demonic interference). The family pet is also often the first to suffer as a result of supernatural threat. For instance, both a red setter puppy and a family of possums are "liter-

ally destroyed" by the terrifying forces that inhabit the titular residence in Anne Rivers Siddons's 1978 novel *The House Next Door* (2006, p. 69). The fate of Church, the uber-belligerent family feline in King's *Pet Sematary*, who is, first, flattened by a truck, and then resurrected as a soulless killing machine, provides a horrible foreshadowing of the lengths devastated patriarch Louis Gage will go to in order to cheat death when his youngest child perishes on the same road.

Animals in horror can also serve as sources of solace to the lonely and to the isolated, as well as instruments of revenge for the resentful and marginalized. "Sredni Vashtar" the "polecat-ferret" in Saki's 1911 tale performs both functions, becoming both "god and religion" to a lonely little boy and handily dispatching the child's guardian, the ill-fated Mrs. De Ropp (1995, p. 19). Another isolated young man, the protagonist of Stephen Gilbert's *Ratman's Notebooks* (1968—the source for the 1971 film *Willard*), finds both friendship and a means of exerting revenge upon those who have wronged him among the local rat population, though he learns the hard way that his new friends object to being ditched when they are no longer needed.

However, it is dogs that most often serve as companions within horror fiction, and they perform this role most frequently for emotionally repressed male characters. For instance, Elia A. Peattie's saccharine canine ghost story "A Spectral Collie" (1898) features a lonely young rancher whose isolation is assuaged by the attentions of his beloved dog, whose devotion is such that she saves his life from beyond the grave. One of the most memorable episodes in Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (1954) is devoted to the desperate efforts of protagonist Richard Neville to domesticate a feral dog who appears to be the only other living thing left on earth. In Susan Hill's *The Woman in Black* (1983), the reassuring presence of a Jack Russell Terrier, "Spider," helps keep the protagonist Arthur Kipps from succumbing to insanity during his horrific stay in the haunted confines of Eel Marsh House. In *The Silence of the Lambs*, Jame Gumb fawns over his beloved toy poodle, "Precious," whose presence highlights the character's performative hyper-femininity as well as his consistent conflation of the human and the animal.⁹ Precious also goes on to serve an important plot function—Catherine Baker Martin survives because she has the gumption to hold the dog hostage long enough to be rescued. More recently, in Michelle Paver's *Dark Matter* (2010), the cynical protagonist eventually has his defenses broken down by the playfulness and loyalty of a husky named Isaac, who helps him stay alive in the face of a terrifying supernatural foe. Jack Russell Terrier, "Friend," repays the self-sacrifice and heroism of the human owner who has saved his life by (possibly) providing advance warning of an entirely understandable animal uprising in Jonathan Carroll's "Friend's Best Man" (1987). A rather less heart-warming tale of one boy and his dog features in Ken Greenhall's 1977 novel *Hell Hound* (aka *Baxter*) which is partly related from the perceptive of a sociopathic pit bull.¹⁰ Coming between a man and his dog also has fatal consequences in Jack Ketchum's *Red* (1995), in which a self-sufficient old man embarks upon a bloody revenge spree when a group of callous young men kill his beloved canine companion.

For Dean Koontz, the golden retriever has long served as an (eventually) quasi-angelic embodiment of loyalty, bravery, and goodness. This tendency first became pronounced in his horror/SF thriller novel *Watchers* (1987), in which a super-intelligent dog comes to the rescue of a troubled army veteran and a reclusive young woman. Koontz has since written several other novels that expand upon his conviction that dogs are somehow an instrument of the divine, in part as tribute to the memory of his own dog, Trixie, who now even has her own website (and, like the late Virginia Andrews, her own posthumous publishing line). Though his most famous fictional canine is undoubtedly the rabid St. Bernard Cujo, in real life, much of Stephen King's social media presence is devoted to chronicling the sinister antics of his corgi, Molly (aka "The Thing of Evil").

As James Serpell observes, "...the dog, like a faithful human employee, presses moral claims upon us that are more strident and less easily ignored than those emanating from most other domestic species.... The proverbial friendliness and fidelity of dogs may, however, create a burdensome sense of guilt when we use these animals in ways that appear to betray their loyalty and affection" (Serpell 1996, pp. 234–235). Indeed, guilt related to the cruel mistreatment of a beloved hound plays a key role in Guy de Maupassant's "Mademoiselle Cocotte" (1883), in which a coachman who dotes upon his overly fecund canine is forced to kill her by his brutally pragmatic master. After drowning the trusting animal in a nearby waterway, the coachman has a nervous breakdown and goes away to rest for a few weeks. When he is finally feeling better, a friend suggests that they take a swim—at which point the coachman comes across the rotted, bloated corpse of his canine victim and instantly loses what is left of his sanity.

Though to a lesser extent than their feline rivals, the dog, on occasion, can also have overtly supernatural associations. Frank Belknap Long's "The Hounds of Tindalos" (1929) are eldritch beasts who exist outside of conventional time and space (and admittedly defy categorization as "actual" animals). More uncanny canines appear in Robert Aickman's typically unsettling 1975 tale "The Same Dog" (which may in fact be a typically off-kilter werewolf tale). More recently, David Morrell's 2011 short story "They" (in part inspired by *Little House on the Prairie*) pits Midwestern settlers against both the brutal winter and a pack of eerily cunning wild dogs. It is worth noting, however, that the most famous dog in modern horror fiction—King's Cujo—is decidedly non-supernatural and also more victim than villain. Having been bitten by a rabid bat, the previously gentle family pet surely cannot be held directly responsible for the horrific violence he inflicts on his human victims.

By dint of their independent nature, perceived arrogance, and, in particular, their historical and folkloric associations with the occult, cats are much more frequently associated with supernatural evil than dogs. They are also more likely to exact a gruesome revenge upon those who have done them wrong. For instance, the abusive cat owner in Poe's "The Black Cat" is condemned to the gallows by the mysterious feline, who emits a telltale "wailing shriek, half

of horror, and half of triumph, such as might have arisen only out of hell" at a very inopportune moment (Poe 2008, p. 234). Another wronged cat gets her own back in fine style in Bram Stoker's "The Squaw" (1893). When an arrogant American tourist crushes the head of a playful little kitten with a rock, it isn't long before the vengeful mother cat cleverly traps him inside a medieval torture device. When the device is opened, the horrified onlookers see the triumphant cat "purring loudly as she licked the blood which trickled through the gashed socket of his eyes" (Stoker 2006, p. 49).

We are told that "the cat is cryptic and close to strange things men cannot see" at the beginning of H.P. Lovecraft's "The Cats of Ulthar" (1921) (Lovecraft 1987, p. 77). Sure enough, when the region's strict prohibition against cat-killing is violated by foolish trappers, the local feline community soon teams up to pick their bones clean. In Michael Joseph's "The Yellow Cat" (1938), a dejected gambler is elevated from poverty to prosperity when he feeds "a strange, famished yellow cat," but, despite his dramatic change in fortunes, soon becomes repulsed by the strange animal and throws it into a canal—only to find himself transforming into the cursed creature. In Stephen King's "The Cat from Hell" (1977), a hit man also finds out the hard way that it is best not to tangle with felines. More unusually, a friendly railway cat suddenly comes to epitomize goodness and innocence in Conrad Aiken's "Hello, Tib" (1960), although this realization is only a prelude to the animal's sudden accidental death, which confirms for the gloomy narrator that the world is an essentially cruel place. As befits a novel in which the heroine and her sister eventually decide to embrace life as modern-day witches, Jonas the cat is both confidant and familiar to disturbed teenager Merricat Blackwood in Shirley Jackson's *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962).

Domestic cats who have been transformed by terrible supernatural forces play a key role in two of the best American horror novels of the 1980s: T.E.D. Klein's *The Ceremonies* (1984) and Stephen King's *Pet Sematary* (1983). A possessed cat also lashes out at Florence, the ill-fated psychic in Matheson's *Hell House* (1971). However, the cats are very much in control in Lynne Truss's delightful comic novel *Cat Out of Hell* (2014), which features a long-lived talking feline named Roger, who both sounds "a bit like Vincent Price," and is "a bit of a bastard" (Truss 2014, p. 10). Roger soon reveals to the understandably stunned human narrator that some of the other uncommonly long-lived talking felines who secretly inhabit our world are in the habit of dabbling in the occult and murdering humans. Another talking cat, Behemoth, serves as a disciple of the devil in Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* (1967). Teaching a cat how to speak in Saki's "Tobermory" (1912) turns out to a mistake once it becomes clear that the feline in question is possessed of both a lacerating wit and a withering disdain for social niceties. Arthur Machen uses the example of the talking cat (or dog) as one of the examples of sheer *wrongness* of "real sin" in his prologue to "The White People" (1904), thereby furthering a trope that surely owes much to the resentment of Shakespeare's Caliban, who famously cursed those who taught him how to

speak. The animal able to vocally articulate its discontent is always a deeply destabilizing prospect.

As previously noted, when farm animals/livestock feature prominently in horror fiction, their presence usually highlights the dehumanizing effects of agriculture and/or the meat processing industry. However, cattle, pigs, sheep, and horses do occasionally play other roles within the genre. Pigs are depicted as uncanny/monstrous figures much more often than their bovine, equine, and ovine counterparts, as seen in the likes of Clive Barker's "Pig's Blood Blues" (1984), William Hope Hodgson's "The Hog" (1947), Graham Masterson's *Flesh and Blood* (1994), and even *The Amityville Horror*, in which the youngest Lutz child claims to be in contact with a pig-shaped demon named "Jodie." More recently, wild pigs with a grudge against humanity feature as the antagonists in Duncan McGeary's *Tusker's* series (2015–). The fact that pigs can eat pretty much anything—or *anyone*—they like forms a key plot point in Thomas Harris's *Hannibal* (1999) in which Virginia meat-packing scion Mason Verger arranges for a pack of vicious Sicilian wild boars to eat his nemesis, Hannibal Lecter (though this inevitably backfires rather spectacularly). A herd of ghost pigs devours an unwise sightseer in Barry Pain's "The Tower" (1911). Death by pig also features in Michael McDowell's novel *The Amulet* (1979). However, "Misery" in the novel of the same name is, to be fair, an entirely blameless animal whose *owner*, romance novel enthusiast Annie Wilkes, is completely insane.¹¹

Although they do form part of the vanguard of the human-stamping animal uprising in Arthur Machen's 1917 novella "The Terror," neither cows nor sheep feature prominently in horror fiction, possibly because they lack the disturbingly human-like qualities (such as their keen intelligence and disconcertingly *familiar* skin and flesh texture) often located in their porcine comrades. Indeed, the most prominent role played by sheep in modern horror fiction is only a cameo role: FBI trainee Clarice Starling's desire to stop the "screaming" of the lambs she witnessed being sent for slaughter as a child fuels her innate desire to save the powerless (and again highlights the novel's consistent conflation of the dehumanization of women with the objectification of animals). Sheep entirely lack the occult associations of their goat cousins: for instance, the break-out star of the acclaimed Puritan horror movie *The Witch* (2015) was the magnificently surly "Black Philip." Cows, which, similarly, rarely seem like a threat to humanity and are seldom associated with the supernatural, also tend to keep a low profile, although, as noted earlier, an unlikely rebellion of cow-kind does transpire in Matthew Stokoe's *Cows*, and Michael Logan's *Apocalypse Cow* (2012) features zombie cows (as well as other infected farm animals with a lust for human flesh). Horses playing a prominent part in horror fiction are also pretty rare, although sightings of a ghostly equine associated with a terrible family curse do occur in Hodgson's "The Horse of the Invisible" (1910).

Stories featuring apes and monkeys, animals who bear a particularly obvious resemblance to their human relatives, often feature in plots in which the fine line between man and beast is dangerously undermined. For instance, the cli-

matic revelation in Poe's "The Murders of the Rue Morgue" (1841) concerns the discovery that the murderer who has been terrorizing Paris is an orangutan rather than a "raving maniac" of the human variety (Poe 2008, p. 41). As Jess Nevins notes, primates are the variety of ape "most commonly used in horror stories." In addition to Poe's homicidal orangutan, he cites example of the jealous, sign language-using ape who kills his master's new wife in Rudyard Kipling's "Bertran and Bimi" (1891) (Nevins 2013, p. 79).

Our closest cousins can also make their presence known in overtly supernatural tales: in E.F. Benson's 1933 story "Monkeys," a young surgeon who practices vivisection upon the titular animals begins to experience vivid hallucinations of monkey-like creatures, and, sure enough, meets a suitably gruesome fate courtesy of an ancient Egyptian curse. Hallucinatory monkeys more famously feature in J.S. Le Fanu's "Green Tea" (1871), in which an unfortunate clergyman is tormented to the point of suicide by visions of "a small monkey, perfectly black," while it is a supernaturally empowered monkey appendage that does the damage in W.W. Jacobs's "The Monkey's Paw" (1902) (1995, p. 22).

The most famous bird in the entire horror genre is probably Poe's raven (though ravens and crows often provide ominous set dressing in both fiction and film). The parrot's ability to mimic human speech is significant in both John Collier's "Bird of Prey" (1940) and Robert Hitchen's "How Love Came to Professor Guildea" (1900), in which a parrot mindlessly repeats the smothering entreaties of the repulsively clingy ghost tormenting his buttoned-up master. Birds are, however, understandably more usually considered a *physical* threat when they are depicted in the collective rather than in the singular, as in Philip MacDonald's "Our Feathered Friends" (1931) and, most famously, Daphne du Maurier's understated masterpiece "The Birds" (1952), which will be discussed in more detail later.

The fact that birds—along with other small-sized animals such as insects, arachnids, crabs, flies, worms, rats, snails, bees, and slugs—tend to feature as active antagonists only when assembled in a group underlines a trend previously identified by Noël Carroll, who argues in *The Philosophy of Horror* (1990) that "existing creatures" (as opposed to imaginary monsters or animal/monster hybrids) are rendered repulsive and/or threatening when they are either magnified (i.e. they dramatically increase in size, as in the numerous horror B-movies he cites) or represented as a mass (Carroll 1990, pp. 49–51). He also argues that creatures who *already* disgust us or otherwise serve as preexisting "phobic objects" are rendered particularly horrific when this process of either "massification" or "magnification" takes place (p. 50).

Little wonder perhaps that British horror publishing in particular responded to the 1970s cinematic trend for campy animal attack movies kick-started by the likes of *The Birds* (1963), *Jaws* (1975), *The Hellstrom Chronicles* (1971), and a host of less reputable imitators,¹² with a series of pulpy, sex-and-violence heavy novels in which animal species already associated with squalor and revulsion (such as the hyper-aggressive vermin that overrun the London slums in James

Herbert's *The Rats* (1978)) run amok. In addition to Herbert's proto-Thatcherite vermin (who like to chow down on the most vulnerable and marginalized representatives of British society), giant crustaceans took out their frustrations on humankind in pulp maven Guy N. Smith's *Crabs* series (1976–), while a generation of horror fans were forever put off their lettuce by Shaun Hutson's *Slugs* (1982). It's a trend which amply supports Carroll's observation that "Things that creep and crawl—and that tend to make our flesh creep and crawl—are prime candidates for the objects of art-horror; such creatures already disgust, and augmenting their scale increases their physical dangerousness" (p. 49).

The obviously non-mammalian physicality of insects, arachnids, and invertebrates, as well as the fact that they are much smaller than us, means that they are also usually only actively threatening when grouped together in large numbers. Horror narratives in which ants feature (as in science fiction films such as Saul Bass's eerie 1974 oddity *Phase IV*) tend to focus upon the seemingly uncanny intelligence of the "hive mind" as well as their ability to overwhelm us by dint of their sheer numbers. This is certainly the case in both H.G. Wells's "Empire of the Ants" (1905) and Carl Stephenson's "Leiningen Versus the Ants" (1937), which Carroll memorably describes as "the *Moby Dick*" of the "insect genre" (p. 50). Ant invasions are also sometimes used as broader signifiers of the human loss of control over the natural environment, as in Matheson's *I Am Legend* (in which the vampire plague is preceded by a plague of ants), and a rather gentler post-plague narrative, George R.R. Stewart's 1949 novel *Earth Abides* (which is not actually a horror story per se). The most famous uncanny spiders in all horror fiction are probably the horrific nest of "enormous" ones found in "The Ash-Tree" (1904) by M.R. James, although more recently, a plague of ancient, flesh-eating spiders attempts, with thus far considerable success, to take over the world in Ezekiel Boone's *The Hatching* series (2016–).

As Stephen T. Asma (2009) notes, our very conception of "monstrosity" is inherently related to our "usual anthropological xenophobia. People with customs different from us are weird, but perhaps different skin colors are weirder still, and people with a dog's head and helpless people with a mouth on their chest, well... Animals are similarly conceptualized on a continuum of strangeness: first, non-native species, then hybrids of surprising combination, and finally, at the furthest margins, shape-shifters and indescribable creatures" (p. 26). It is for this reason that snakes, lizards, amphibians, insects, invertebrates, arachnids, and in particular, cephalopods such as octopi, squid, and cuttlefish so often provide us with a blueprint for the physical characteristics of the repulsive and essentially unknowable alien "other." The most famous example is probably H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu (though a strong runner-up can be found in the tentacular horrors that terrorize the besieged supermarket in Stephen King's 1980 novella *The Mist*). Indeed, according to Eugene Thacker, it is for this reason that the very "duality" of the cephalopod—"the non-mammalian characteristics that evoke the abyss of the terrifying unknown, with their multiplicity of seemingly incongruous features—tentacles and multiple 'arms' with suckers, a razor-sharp 'beak,' a complex nervous system, rows of

intestinal 'teeth,' and a formless 'head'—whose cogence falls apart once one tries to make sense of the whole creature" terrorizes us so effectively (2015, p. 150). In addition, like the titular shark in Peter Benchley's *Jaws* (1974), the threat presented by sinister marine life also reminds us that "the ocean can generate and conceal anything in its depths" (Kawin 2015, p. 79).

As we have seen thus far, non-human animals, as in literature more generally, perform a wide range of roles within the horror genre. However, to conclude, I will discuss two major animal-revolt narratives, which significantly predate the 1970s and 1980s examples previously cited, in order to underline the assertion that these kinds of stories represent one of the most important—but by no means the *only*—ways in which animals feature prominently within the genre.

Although it has been sorely overshadowed by Hitchcock's immensely influential film adaptation, which discards everything except the core premise and the bleakly inconclusive ending, du Maurier's "The Birds" remains one of the finest animal-revolt stories ever written. Set in rural Cornwall in the years following World War II (the story astutely evokes both the lingering trauma of German bombing raids as well as the Cold War anxieties which followed),¹³ the protagonist, Nat, is a disabled veteran who works as an agricultural laborer. A keen observer of the local birdlife, he frequently ponders the invisible but innate drives which motivate both birds and humans: "Perhaps, thought Nat, munching his pasty by the cliff's edge, a message comes to the birds in autumn, like a warning. Winter is coming. Many of them perish. And like people, who, apprehensive of deaths before their time, drive themselves to work or folly, the birds do likewise" (du Maurier 1987, p. 154).

A sudden change in the wind—and an unseasonable cold snap, supposedly "something connected with the arctic circle"—brings about a rapid change in ornithological behavior which quickly escalates from the mildly unsettling to the downright horrific (p. 162). Soon, the sight of thousands and thousands of gulls bobbing up and down on the waves inspires terrible dread, and the wireless news from London starts to bring news that "not only here, but everywhere," "something has happened to the birds" (p. 162).

Hardened by his wartime experiences and sensing immediately that this is no passing eccentricity of nature, Nat ensures that he and his family are better prepared for the nocturnal onslaught to come than their more complacent neighbors. He stockpiles food and fuel, boards up his windows and doors, and is grimly aware that "each household must look after their own" (p. 166). The story concludes with no end to the nightmare in sight, as Nat and his family hunker down with dwindling fuel and food supplies, faced with an enemy that likely cannot and will not be defeated. Whatever the eventual outcome, it is clear that humanity's tenure as the most powerful species on earth has been irrevocably undermined, and a dire price has been paid for our complacency and unthinking sense of superiority.

du Maurier was, however, by no means the first author to depict a rural British community beset by death and destruction from a seemingly unlikely

source. However, it is the animal kingdom in general—and farm animals in particular—that rise up against their human “masters” in Machen’s *The Terror*. Again, as would later be the case in du Maurier (though more explicitly here), the animal revolt is linked to real-life conflict on a grand scale: in this instance, World War I. A seemingly disconnected series of macabre incidents—the death of an airman brought down by pigeons, a mysterious explosion at a local munitions factory, and “the tale of a little child who wandered out into the lanes one sunny afternoon, and never came back to the cottage on the hill” culminates in a series of brutal and seemingly inexplicable deaths taking place in and around a small Welsh village (Machen 2006, p. 336).

It soon becomes clear that something is very wrong indeed with the local animals. Even the most loyal sheepdog turns savage, and a farm family, the Griffins, is found starved to death in their cottage, leaving behind a document chronicling their increasing panic, as they are placed under siege by the very animals that represent their livelihood. “The secret of the terror,” is, as Machen puts it, ultimately “condensed in a sentence: *the animals had revolted against men*” (2006, p. 410, my italics). As S.T. Joshi notes, *The Terror*, though highly influential, cannot ever quite settle on one explanation for events: “...either the animals were affected by a ‘contagion of hate’ because of the war, or the animals felt that human beings had abdicated their spiritual role as ‘lords of creation’ by sinking too deeply into materialism” (Joshi 1990, p. 31). Nevertheless, though the revolt appears to have subsided by the end of the tale, it ends on a chilling note, which lays the groundwork for the many other animal rebellions to follow in Machen’s wake: “They have risen once—they may rise again” (Machen 2006, p. 414).

What *The Terror*, “The Birds,” and subsequent tales of this kind, such as Jonathan Carroll’s “Friend’s Best Man,” recognize is that our inherently human-centric way of viewing the world is not only short-sighted but immensely dangerous. By taking for granted our supposed supremacy over both the natural world and the non-human animals that populate it alongside us, we have made the mistake of thinking ourselves invulnerable. Indeed, as Katarina Gregersdotter and Nicklas Hållen note of the animal invasion/revolt theme in genre cinema, “The invasion narrative is based on the hermetic separation of the world of animals and the artificial world of the human animal. The violence that such films feature is typically a response to the arrogance involved in humankind’s separation from nature, from the ecosystem, and the food chain” (2015, p. 207). By its very nature, horror fiction, which so often dramatizes the threat posed by the hostile and monstrous “other,” frequently encompasses narratives in which human and non-human animals are violently pitted against one another. Yet, as we have seen, despite the critical prominence (and the obvious resonance) of the animal-revolt theme, it is important to acknowledge that animals in horror fiction also perform many other narrative and thematic functions.

They can be allies, victims, adversaries, and instruments of vengeance. They can be taken over by supernatural forces, they can themselves be inherently uncanny, or they can even act as advantageous early warning systems. Some

non-human species unsettle us by dint of their "alien" physiognomy, or other essentially "unknowable" qualities, and for this reason often serve as real-world blueprints for both the "alien" and the non-human "monster" in art and fantasy. Other animal species remind us, often uneasily, of the liminal physical and moral boundaries between humanity and the non-human other. And all of them remind us also that, as Berger notes, "The animals has secrets which, unlike the secrets of caves, mountains, seas, are specifically addressed to man" (2015, p. 14). What remains constant is that the ways in which animals interact with humans (and vice versa) in horror fiction tells us about ourselves and about the ways in which we interact with the non-human intelligences whose presence, in one way or another, we must contend with every single day of our lives.

NOTES

1. John Berger, "Why Look at Animals?" (1977). Berger's observations are seminal, and often reiterated, such as by Jeanne Dubino, who begins *Representing the Modern Animal in Culture* by noting that "Until the modern era, animals were everywhere. Animals were not just part of the visual landscape; people's lives were closely intertwined with animals. Animals suffused human consciousness" (2014, p. 1).
2. See Waldau, *Animal Studies*, 34; Ryan, *Animal Theory*, 69–70.
3. Readers interested in this topic should begin by consulting Roger Luckhurst's chapter "Transitions from Victorian Gothic to Modern Horror, 1880–1932" in *Horror: A Literary History*, which contains an excellent discussion of period-specific "bio-horror" which dramatized anxieties related to this terror of the, "animalistic" inner self (pp. 103–130).
4. However, as Margo DeMello points out in *Animals and Society: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies*, the question of "What makes an animal an animal?" is also a very loaded one that represents "one of the primary issues of the field" (2012, p. 15).
5. The importance of dogs in Wharton is discussed in detail by Jennifer Haycock in "The Dogs of 'Kerfol': Animals, Authorship, and Wharton," *Journal of the Short Story in English* 58 (2012), 175–186.
6. As it does in the acclaimed 2015 Austrian horror film *Goodnight Mommy*, which has much in common with Tryon's novel.
7. See, for instance, Blake Snyder's *Save the Cat! The Last Book on Screenwriting You'll Ever Need* (2005).
8. A disturbed young man who uses a bolt gun to kill a female victim (and who dispassionately views footage of pig slaughter by the same method before committing the murder) features in Michael Haneke's film *Benny's Video* (1992).
9. Wolfe and Elmer discuss Gumb's "grotesque humanization" of Precious and the significance of Catherine's actions in in some detail.
10. The novel is discussed in some detail by Will Erickson at: <http://toomuchhorrorfiction.blogspot.ie/2014/02/hell-hound-by-ken-greenhall-1977-hes.html> (accessed January 11, 2017). It was re-released by Valancourt Books in 2017.
11. An illuminating (and entertaining) discussion of the many evil pigs found in British pulp horror can be found on the "Vault of Evil!" message boards: <http://vaultofevil.proboards.com/thread/6105/pigs> (accessed January 11, 2017).

12. I write about many of these films in Chapter 5 of *The Rural Gothic in American Popular Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 178–213. Those interested in the topic should also consult *Animal Horror Cinema* and *Monstrous Nature: Environment and Horror on the Big Screen* (University of Nebraska Press, 2016).
13. Indeed, Gina Wisker notes that the behavior of the birds can be seen as “a metaphor for the gradual invasion of Communism or any other force” (2005, p. 83).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, Carol J. 2015. *The Sexual Politics of Meat*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Aldana Reyes, Xavier. 2016. *Horror: A Literary History*. London: British Library.
- Asma, Stephen T. 2009. *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Berger, John. 2015. Why Look at Animals? In *About Looking*. London: Bloomsbury E-Book.
- Bloch, Robert. 1959. *Psycho*. London: Corgi.
- Carroll, Noël. 1990. *The Philosophy of Horror: Or, The Paradoxes of the Heart*. London: Routledge.
- DeMello, Margo. 2012. *Animals and Society: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- du Maurier, Daphne. 1987. *Daphne du Maurier's Classics of the Macabre*. London: Victor Gollancz.
- Dubino, Jean. 2014. *Representing the Modern Animal in Culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ellis, Bret Easton. 1991. *American Psycho*. London: Corgi.
- Gregersdotter, Katarina, Johan Höglund, and Nicklas Hållén. 2015. *Animal Horror Cinema: Genre, History and Criticism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Joseph, Michael. 1938. The Yellow Cat. *The Daily News* (Perth), October 14. <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/85022311>. Accessed January 11, 2017.
- Joshi, S.T. 1990. *The Weird Tale*. Holicong, PA: Wildside Press.
- Kawin, Bruce W. 2015. *Horror and the Horror Film*. London: Anthem Press.
- Lovecraft, H.P. 1987. *H.P. Lovecraft Omnibus 2: Dagon and Other Macabre Tales*. London: Grafton Books.
- Machen, Arthur. 2006. *Tales of Terror and the Supernatural*. Leyburn: Tartarus Press.
- Nevins, Jess. 2013. Apes in Literature. In *The Apes of Wrath*, ed. Richard Klaw, 73–82. San Francisco: Tachyon.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. 2008. *Edgar Allan Poe: Selected Tales*. 2nd ed., ed. David Van Leer. Oxford: Oxford World's Classics.
- Regan, Tom, and Andrew Linzey. 2010. *Other Nations: Animals in Modern Literature*. Texas: Baylor University Press.
- Rust, Stephen A., and Carter Soles. 2014. Ecohorror Special Cluster: ‘Living in Fear, Living in Dread, Pretty Soon We’ll All Be Dead’. *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment* 21 (3): 509–512. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isle/isu085>. Accessed January 9, 2017.
- Ryan, Paul. 2013. *Animal Theory: A Critical Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Saki (H.H. Munro). 1995. *Sredni Vashtar and Other Stories*. New York: Dover Books.

- Scarborough, Dorothy. 1917. *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction*. New York: G.P. Putnam.
- Serpell, James. 1996. *The Domestic Dog: Its Evolution, Behavior, and Interactions with People*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Siddons, Anne Rivers. 2006. *The House Next Door*. New York: Pocket Books.
- Stoker, Bram. 2006. *Dracula's Guest and Other Weird Stories*, ed. Kate Hebblethwaite. London: Penguin.
- Thacker, Eugene. 2015. *Tentacles Longer Than Night: Horror of Philosophy*. Vol. 3. Hants: Zero Press. E-book.
- Truss, Lynn. 2014. *Cat Out of Hell*. London: Arrow Books.
- Waldau, Paul. 2013. *Animal Studies: An Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wisker, Gina. 2005. *Horror Fiction: An Introduction*. London: A&C Black.
- Wolfe, Cary. 2003. *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.



Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Woods?: Deep Dark Forests and Literary Horror

Elizabeth Parker

INTRODUCTION

In his seminal work, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilisation* (1992), Robert Pogue Harrison informs us that “most of the places of human habitation in the West were at some time in the past more or less densely forested” (1992, p. ix). As the centuries have passed, humans have become increasingly dislocated and disassociated from the forest as we have evolved, as Jay Appleton argues, from “forest-dwellers” to “apartment-house-dwellers” (1996, p. 29). Nonetheless, as Richard Hayman attests, there is “an echoing green” that resounds within and around us, as we continue to sense the importance of this landscape (2003, p. 1).¹ This explains, to an extent, why the image and symbol of the forest is so hugely and tangibly significant in the collective cultural imagination. The forest is a thoroughly evocative setting, redolent with a variety of allegorical significance. “Its trees,” as Mircea Eliade writes, “conjure a full range [...] of symbolism,” and certainly the woods provide us with a whole host of varied and contradictory metaphors, which thoroughly pervade both our everyday language and our stories throughout history (as cited in Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1969, p. 1026). Interestingly, when we imagine the forest, we tend toward extremes. The forest is commonly read as a *binary* space: as either “good” or “bad.” When it is “good,” it is a remedial setting of light, wonder, and enchantment; when it is “bad,” it is a dark, dangerous, and terrifying wilderness. Literature is filled with seemingly infinite examples of each: we have the bright and enchanted forests of medieval romance, of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,

E. Parker (✉)
University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

of A. A. Milne, and of Enid Blyton; and we have such dark and foreboding forests as “The Suicide Forest” in Dante, “The Forbidden Forest” in the *Harry Potter* series, and the ominous woodland settings in many, many of our literary fairy tales. Here, as we examine this environment in the context of the horror genre, the focus is, of course, on the forest’s more ominous manifestations.

Nowadays, there is little practical reason to be afraid of the woods. For the majority of us in the West, the forest environment does not feature in our everyday lives, and it does not ordinarily present a threat to our existence. Most of its predators that have been seen to endanger humans—such as wolves and bears—are now threatened with extinction, and it is much more common for humans to die in towns and in cities than in the midst of the woods. The forest, in reality, is just not that dangerous. Sara Maitland reflects this idea when she writes “inside most of us post-enlightenment and would-be rational adults there is a child who is terrified by the wild wood”: her implication is that the modern adult who fears the forest does so *despite* the fact that he or she is “post-enlightenment” and “rational” (2012, p. 200). It is suggested, therefore, that such fears are today not only unfounded but also regressive and irrational. As Little Red Riding Hood informs us in *Into the Woods* (1986), “the woods are just trees” and “the trees are just wood,” and no one “should” have any cause for anxiety (Sondheim 1986). Yet, as Maitland writes, there is much evidence to suggest that we, nonetheless, continue to be “terrified by the wild wood.” Indeed, popular culture abounds with seemingly infinite examples of the foreboding forest. As a site of trial, trepidation, and terror, the Deep Dark Forest has an extensive history and is one of the most enduring and pervasive images in Western culture. It is unsurprising, then, that this landscape commonly features in the horror genre. Whether the woods serve as an ambient backdrop to the unfolding terror, or as a more active and animate threat in themselves, which grab, gobble, or even molest human intruders, the trope of “horror in the woods,” as Rick McDonald attests, is now so well-known that it has become “a cliché” (2013, p. 4).

This chapter centers on the role of the forest as an archetypal symbol of horror in fiction. Across different times and different genres—from *Gilgamesh* (circa 2100 BC), to our traditional popular fairy tales and their various reimaginations, to contemporary popular literature, such as *Twilight* (2005–2008) and *The Hunger Games* (2008–2010), and to contemporary film and television, such as *The Forest* (2016), *Evil Dead* (2013), and *Twin Peaks* (1990–1991, 2017)—the forest is recurrently used in our stories to create a sense of terror and dread for readers and viewers alike. This chapter is not intended as an encyclopedic or a comprehensive overview of the Deep Dark Forest in horror fiction. Instead, it takes as its starting point the fact that it is important to question and understand *why* this landscape is such a perennial setting for our horror. This chapter, thus, falls in with recent interrogations into what Simon C. Estok has termed “eco-phobia” (human fear or hatred of the natural world), which is a subject of increasing relevance in an age in which we are edging ever closer toward human-caused environmental crisis (2009, p. 203). This chapter questions, therefore, what it is about the woods that makes them so effective as a horror

locale, and, thus, *why* it is that we still fear this environment. In many of our horror texts that feature the forest, the terror interestingly stems from the uncertainty as to what exactly it is about this setting that is to be feared. The forest holds, as Arthur Machen describes in *The Great God Pan* (1890), some “awful secret,” while Algernon Blackwood, in “The Man Whom the Trees Loved” (1912), has one of his characters desperately proclaim, “this tree and forest business is so vague and horrible!” (Blackwood 1912, p. 40). The Deep Dark Forest is exactly that—deep and dark—and so the source of its terrors seems, indeed, to be mysterious, shadowy, and just out of sight. This chapter argues that there are discernible patterns in our arboreal horror texts, which collectively reveal that there are seven main reasons that we fear the woods and which I here term “the Seven Theses” in homage to Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s “Monster Culture (Seven Theses)” (1996). This chapter introduces each of these “theses” in turn, examining how exactly they function in the horror genre, and makes the case that at least one (and usually several) of these is always present in any text with themes of arboreal menace. The Seven Theses are as follows: the forest is the imagined *antithesis* to civilization; the forest is bound to our fears of the *past*; the forest is a site of gruesome *trial*; the forest is the space in which we are *lost*; the forest is the space in which we are *eaten*; the forest is the manifestation of the human *unconscious*; and the forest is an *antichristian* environment. Collectively, these theses are intended to serve as a lens or means through which we can read, understand, and deconstruct the consistent and increasing usage of the Deep Dark Forest in the horror genre.

WHY WE FEAR THE FOREST: THE SEVEN THESES

The first reason we fear the forest is because it is commonly and traditionally construed as the *antithesis* to civilization. Harrison argues that civilization, in the West, has specifically been defined “*against*” the forests (1992, p. 2). “Civilization” and “the forest” have been seen as mutually exclusive opposites. This contention, in part, belongs to what Val Plumwood has termed “the human-nature dualism,” which is a result of the human propensity to view ourselves as somehow outside of and separate to the natural world (1993, p. 81). On the one hand, this idea that civilization exists “against” the forests is based somewhat in fact. In the Western world, forests are largely synonymous with wilderness, and so it is out of the forests that order has been created. Human settlement has necessarily involved the clearing, taming, and cultivation of this landscape. The first thing that settlers do is to construct boundaries—we demarcate territory, we name and map the land, and we create firm distinctions between the “inside” and the “outside”—and, in doing so, we ostensibly order the space around us. Gaston Bachelard argues that inside we feel “enclosed and protected,” thereby insinuating that outside we are exposed and vulnerable (1958, p. 7). The forest not only signifies the dangers of the outside, but also hints at the essentially fragile and transitory nature of human civilization. Boundaries between wild space and cultivated, settled space require continual maintenance to ensure that nature does not reclaim and then destroy

human construction. The forest, then, quite literally, is a force that must always be fought back. “The forest,” as Francis Spufford ominously declares, “encroaches from without” (2002, p. 13). In Blackwood’s “The Willows” (1907), which is arguably *the* literary classic of arboreal horror, we see this idea brought terrifyingly to life. In this tale, two men find themselves stranded on a deserted, yet forested island and gradually come to fear that the trees that surround them are sentient, perilous, and adversary. The men pitch their tent in a small clearing in the midst of the forest and—in one of the most memorable and perturbing images of the story—awaken each morning to find that the trees have inexplicably edged ever closer toward them. The camp serves here as a microcosm of human settlement and civilization, while the forest symbolizes the nature that must be fought back, as here, the forest quite literally “encroaches from without,” threatening to destroy the ordered “centre” of civilization. On the other hand, this idea that the forest is the antithesis to civilization is much more conceptual. If civilization signifies the ordered, safe, enclosed, and lawful space of the “inside,” the forest signifies the chaos, danger, exposure, and anarchy of the “outside.” In this way, the forest is construed as the opposite, or antithesis, to civilization, leading such critics as Carol Clover to argue that “the whole point” of the forest is that “here, the rules of civilization do not obtain” (1992, p. 124). The undermining or total absence of such rules is, of course, a standard trope in the horror genre, as our monsters, killers, and malevolent ghosts stereotypically refute them. In the woods, however, there is the fear that *everyone* is, or will become, uncivilized, as the primitive setting threatens to create the primitive human. We fear that in the forest, severed from wider civilization, we may forget what it is to be civilized. Yi-fu Tuan argues that “we rely on other human beings for a concept of humanity” and that we lose sight of “how we ought to behave” when the arena is not humanly designed (1977, p. 102). We might say we become “wild,” which is of course a significant homonym, as it subtly implies that in throwing off the restraints of civilization, we become, in a sense, a part of the wilderness, as the “human-nature dualism” is destroyed. A recent example in which we see such ideas is Naomi Novik’s *Uprooted* (2015). In this fantasy-horror novel, the predominant adversary is “the Wood,” a forest mysteriously animated by evil forces. The heroes of the novel are devoted to keeping this malevolent forest at bay, preventing it from coming too close to the villages. The Wood carries with it the power of “corruption,” which in short means that any human or animal that touches or enters any part of the forest will become a dark, twisted, and poisonous version of themselves, which will, moreover, in some way, physically resemble the forest. Here, if one is “corrupted” by and merged with the Wood, they must be immediately exiled from the villages, thus literalizing this fear that the forest is the dangerous antithesis and potential destroyer of civilization.

The second reason we fear the forest is because it is bound to our fears of the *past*. Peter Hutchings argues that the Gothic genre is primarily concerned with our fears of “the return of the past” and certainly the forest, which is bound in both history and the imagination to primeval antiquity, can be seen to play into

such fears (1996, p. 94). "Since the beginning," writes Harrison, "forests have appeared as antecedent to the human world" (1992, p. 1). When in the midst of a forest, one ordinarily has no visual markers to betray a current sense of time: with no signs of architecture, cultivation, or other humans and their styles of dress, it could—as far as one's immediate senses are concerned—be any point in history. Thus, when disoriented and alone in the woods, there is no evidence to hand that we are, indeed, "post-enlightenment" at all. On the one hand, this is certainly appealing, as in the woods we are able to escape the modern world: we can, in a sense, go back in time, as we "get *back* to nature." The positive implication is that we will be freer, purer, and less constrained by the fetters of modern society. But, on the other hand, this return could potentially be sinister, as the securities of the modern world are lost. The pre-enlightenment world is one of magic, superstition, and monsters, and it is one in which we may barely have evolved and be wild, indeed. Moreover, if we return to this idea that "most of the places of human habitation in the West were at some time in the past more or less densely forested," then the forest also symbolizes an era that entirely predates humankind. In this sense, the return of the past—in the form of the return of the forest—threatens our extinction, thus tying into ideas of the forest as an encroaching threat. In addition, our fears of the forest as a return of the past may be linked to what Sally J. Morgan has interestingly termed "heritage noir" (2001, p. 137). "Heritage noir," argues Morgan, is a common device utilized in horror, wherein our fictions thematically evoke our more bloody histories, which in themselves then come to haunt us. For example, the classic trope of the Indian burial ground as a source of horror—as seen, for example, in Stephen King's *The Shining* (1980)—preys on colonial guilt and the fact, as Michael Rogin states, that "American society is built on Indian graves" (1991, p. 5). When considering the forest in the context of heritage noir, it is sadly not difficult to locate evidence of our ongoing bloody history with this environment: we, as a species, are responsible for century upon century of this landscape's destruction and exploitation for human gain. Sharae Deckard argues that our collective guilt in the historical subjugation and depredation of forests can mean that even encountering this landscape in our fictions is decidedly uncanny: it is fitting, in this sense, then, to view our fears of the "return" of the forest as an instance of heritage noir. Perhaps, the most obvious example in the Western history of humanity's violent destruction of the forest is the gradual colonization of the New World. This era saw early settlers thoroughly dwarfed by the expansive wildernesses of America. It saw, too, a multitude of woodland superstitions, from shared Native American mythologies about such forest monsters as the Wendigo, to the many stories *about* the arboreal natives and their mysterious ways, to stories of those seduced in the woods by the Devil himself. It is surely no coincidence that many of our predominant horror writers to foreground the forest, such as Ambrose Bierce and Nathaniel Hawthorne, are American and that many of our most classic forest horror films, such as *The Blair Witch Project* and the *Evil Dead* franchise, are set in the specifically *American* woods. In our

European horror texts set in the woods, there is often a more explicit sense of the traditional fairy tale, which is somehow twisted, as we will come to discuss momentarily.

The third reason the forest is frightening is because it embodies our fears of being *lost*. Fears of being lost are often explored in horror, but there is something especially unnerving about being lost in the woods. In keeping with this idea that the forest is essentially a binary, or dualistic symbol, it is a setting that is interestingly associated both with finding and losing our selves. In the former category, we have such classic texts as Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) and such recent examples as Cheryl Strayed's *Wild: A Journey from Lost to Found* (2012), which center on humanity's redemption through wilderness. Conversely, we have a multitude of texts that exploit what we might think of as the "classic" fear of being lost in the woods, from fairy tales such as "Hansel and Gretel," "Brother and Sister," and "Snow White" to *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) and Carrie Ryan's zombie novel, *The Forest of Hands and Teeth* (2009). Indeed, we have quick—if somewhat unconscious—associations between "lostness" and the forest environment: we readily describe ourselves as "in a wood," "out of the woods," and "unable to see the woods for the trees," while the very word, "bewildered," stems etymologically from the same root as "wilderness" ("wild-dē-or-ness") and so literally describes the uneasy sensation of being lost in the woods (Nash 2001, p. 1). Interestingly, the German word, "*waldeinsamkeit*," which describes the sensation of being alone in the woods, carries connotations of both blissful solitude *and* fearful disorientation. René Descartes once said that, in order to escape the forest, one need only to continue to walk in a straight line (2008, p. 25). And, yet, the very nature of the forest is to disorient; the multitude of trees makes it near impossible to follow a straight path, while studies have shown that we are inclined, against our will, to quite literally walk in circles when in the woods (Golledge 2003, p. 48). There are few visual markers to find one's way, and the density of trees means that the light is frequently occluded. Despite the claim made by one of the protagonists in *The Blair Witch Project* that "it's very hard to get lost [...] these days, and it's even harder to stay lost," people *do* continue to get lost in the forest, and so we continue to hear of such stories.² The media informs us, too, that the forest is, in reality, a common site for dumping bodies. This idea, of course, underlines this landscape as a space in which one will be eternally lost. We find such themes in Hawthorne's famous short story, "Roger Malvin's Burial" (1846), in which much of the terror stems from the idea that the forest is an incorrect, or dangerous, site of burial, in as much that the bodies lost here will be lost to God.³ In addition to being physically lost, we fear in the woods that we will lose our *selves*—that we will indeed become primitive in this primitive setting—thus tying back to this idea that the forest is somehow the antithesis to civilization.

The fourth reason the forest incites anxiety is because it is a setting of *trial*. It is an environment in which we expect to be sorely tested. Such an idea, of course, lends itself well to the horror genre, which is, as Clover asserts, "obsessed with the trials of the everyperson" (1992, p. 17). The forest, specifi-

cally, is a setting that challenges both the internal and external survival skills of those lost in its midst: alone in the woods, one must strive to remain sane, while simultaneously managing to stay alive in the wild. Francis Spufford effectively—and ominously—summarizes the inherent challenge of the woods with the following words: “You are alone, in a dark wood ... Now cope” (2002, p. 63). There is the sense that the forest *itself* is somehow the task at hand or perhaps that the very environment is somehow testing us. Hayman has interestingly argued that “the role of the forest is to act as the ultimate moral arbiter,” an idea that is further reflected in the German aphorism, “der wald hat augen”: “the forest has eyes” (2003, p. 12; Porteous 2012, p. 12). The ways in which we are tested by the woods are various. One recurrent trope in our stories is the idea that this is an environment in which we meet the Devil and in which we are tested through subjection to temptation, as is the case, for example, in Hawthorne’s “Young Goodman Brown” (1835), Anthony Schmidt’s *Darkest Desire* (2012), and films such as *The Witch* (2016) and *Antichrist* (2009). In these texts, the woods are very much presented as the Devil’s domain, where one is especially vulnerable to temptations of grandeur, flesh, and “deliciousness.”⁴ In Scandinavian mythology, it is said that, when Lucifer and his followers were expelled from heaven, they landed in the forest and made it their home. Importantly, when we think of stories in which the forest is a site of trial, we will soon think of fairy tales. This is significant because there is, of course, a strong connection or kinship between fairy tales and our horror fictions. Some of the subject matter of our most popular fairy tales—cannibalism, murder, incest, abuse—is truly the stuff of horror. “Horror fictions,” writes Clover, highlighting the repetitive nature of each genre, “look like nothing so much as fairy tales” (1992, p. 8). In the West, many of our best-loved fairy tales are set in the woods: the very expression, “Deep Dark Forest,” is reminiscent of the fairy tale, conjuring mental images of the twisted, gloomy forests of the Grimm stories. Fairy tales, generally, are associated with trials—weave this straw into gold, separate these lentils from this ash, and so on—and those set in the woods are no exception. Here, our characters must not stray from the path, talk to strangers, or lose their way; they must outwit the forest’s nefarious denizens and often the task at hand, which links back to the forest as a site of *lostness*, is to somehow find a way *out* of the woods. Horror texts that are set in the woods frequently allude, both symbolically and explicitly, to woodland fairy tales. We have deliberate horror “versions” of these tales (*Hansel and Gretel* [2007], *Red Riding Hood* [2003], etc.), and we have more subtle references in horror titles, such as James Herbert’s *The Magic Cottage* (1986), Arthur Machen’s *The Great God Pan* (1890), and *The Blair Witch Project* (2003). Such allusions to fairy tales in horror highlight the forest as a dangerous site of trial and tribulation. For example, in *Blair Witch Project*, there is a dark parallel between the isolated house in the Maryland woods, which is stained with children’s bloody handprints, and the gingerbread cottage where the cannibalistic witch imprisons the children in “Hansel and Gretel.” In horror, moreover, we know that our characters are much less likely

to triumph unscathed. If the forest is survived, our stories tell us that this is an environment in which we learn valuable lessons of strength and resilience.

The fifth reason the forest is a fearsome locale is because it is a setting in which we fear we will be *eaten*. The fear of being literally devoured is, of course, hugely prevalent in horror fiction. From animal nasties to monster movies and cannibal fictions, the genre repeatedly preys on our fears, not only of being killed, destroyed, and excreted but also of being absorbed *into* and becoming a part of the voracious killer. Time and again, in arboreal horror texts, the forest is figured as a voracious and consuming threat. We have seen already that the forest is often seen as something that “encroaches from without” and must be constantly fought back, and such ideas are already suggestive of this landscape’s consuming nature. Significantly, when we discuss the contention between humans and the natural world, this contention is often discussed in both our factual and fictional writings in terms of *appetite*. We tend to imply that both civilization *and* nature are each in danger of consuming—and being consumed—by the other. Peter Barry argues that there is a common “gut feeling that nature is being *gobbled* by culture” (2002, p. 263, my emphasis). It is then a fitting pun that the modern human is often described in terms of the *consumer*, as we have what Shoshanna Ganz has called a “monstrous greed” and what Jonathan Bate has described as an “insatiable desire to consume the products of the earth” (Ganz 2013, p. 88; Bate 1991, p. 56). Peter Benchley, who ironically enough is the author of *Jaws* (1974), describes the human species as “the single most careless, voracious, and omnivorous destroyer of life on earth” (1998, p. 56). And yet, as Stacy Alaimo has argued, “despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary,” we continue to find in our horror fictions that it is *humans* that are cast as the “endangered species” and *nature* that is cast as the edacious monster (2001, p. 279). Certainly we see this repeatedly with the forest. In reality, we are collectively responsible for truly horrifying statistics when it comes to deforestation, as we literally, deliberately, and monstrously consume this landscape’s resources, and yet we repeatedly cast ourselves as the victimized prey in its midst and the forest as the insatiable predator. Firstly, we see this in our stories with the forest’s numerous holes, pits, and crevices—both in the forest floor and in the trees themselves—which serve as symbolic “mouths,” which threaten to *swallow* intruders. We see this, for example, with the bloodthirsty pit in Blackwood’s “The Transfer” and in the ominously consuming “heart trees” of Novik’s *Uprooted* (2015). Secondly, the Deep Dark Forest is traditionally filled with voracious monsters: from literal predators, such as wolves and bears, to the endless fantastical creatures we imagine within it, from the Big Bad Wolf and the many werewolves and witches of the horror genre to the modern-day Slender Man. One of the stereotypical attributes of “the monster” is its hunger and capacity to eat us, so the presence of monsters in the woods serves to solidify this image of the forest as a consuming threat, as the monsters form, on mass, a crowd of hungry and carnivorous mouths. In some instances, the trees are hideously anthropomorphically animated, with literal mouths and an

explicit intention to feed on human flesh, as seen, for example, in *Little Otik* (2000) and the opening to Disney's *Snow White* (1937). Little Otik, much like the man-eating plant in John Collier's "Green Thoughts" (1932) (which is thought to be the inspiration for Audrey II in *Little Shop of Horrors* [1986]), needs human blood and flesh in order to survive, while, in *Snow White*, the titular heroine, when abandoned to the woods, is imperiled by monstrous faces in the trees with hungry, gaping, and cavernous mouths. The fact that the forest is construed so often as a voracious force that threatens to consume us is in some ways potentially progressive if read in an ecocritical or environmental context. Such images of voracious vegetation starkly undermine—or, indeed, violently contradict—the anthropocentric assumption that nature exists to feed and nourish humankind. As J.W. Williamson puts it, we are presented in these stories with "the subverting thought that nature could easily have *us* for supper" (my emphasis) (1995, p. 151).

The sixth reason we fear the forest is because it is a setting that we associate with the human *unconscious*. It is widely acknowledged that there is a definite affinity between horror and psychoanalysis—the two are, as William Patrick Day asserts, "cousins"—and the horror genre is renowned for expressing and giving voice to some of the darkest elements of the Freudian unconscious (1985, p. 179). This is seen, too, in many of our texts that feature the Deep Dark Forest. In fact, Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant—drawing particular attention to its "darkness," "depths," and the "deep roots of its trees"—argue that the archetypal symbol of the forest has actually come to signify the unconscious in the cultural imagination (1969, p. 401). Indeed, one can make the case that the forest has been tied to psychoanalysis since its beginnings. Timothy Morton argues that the forest is the "quintessential image" in Freud's original chapter on the uncanny, in which Freud uses being *lost in a forest* as one of the key examples of experiencing the uncanny (Morton 2007, p. 178). The ways in which we see the Deep Dark Forest as bound to elements of the unconscious in our horror fictions are complex and manifold.

It is essential to note firstly that "landscape," as the human geographer, Yi-fu Tuan writes, "is a construct of the mind as much as it is a physical and measurable entity." Tuan argues that these "landscapes of fear"—of which the forest is an archetypal example—refer as much to "psychological states" as they do to "tangible environments" (1975, p. 5). They are, in David Melbye's words, "landscapes of our *minds*" (2010, p. 2). In keeping with our extensive history of pathetic fallacy—of repeatedly endowing the natural world with human emotional significance—we imbue the forest repeatedly with symbolic, allegorical, and particular psychological significance. One of the key ways in which the psychological effects of being lost in the woods manifest in horror is through madness. Time and again, we see those in its midst turn somewhat wild, tying in again with this word's duplicitous meanings as referring both to one who is unconventional, uncontrolled, and unpredictable, as well as to the uncultivated natural world. Something we commonly see in horror is the idea that no sane folk would ever choose to live in or beside the forest, and so there

is something “wrong” with those that do. There is the sense that these denizens are somehow psychologically *changed* by their proximity to this environment, and there is the fear, as articulated in T. E. D. Klein’s *The Ceremonies* (1984), that “it just isn’t right to build so close to the woods” (1984, p. 106). There is the prejudiced fear that backwoods folk are *backward* folk. We can see this, for example, in such novels as Jack Ketchum’s *The Woman* (2011), Richard Laymon’s *The Woods Are Dark* (1981), and James Dickey’s *Deliverance* (1970).

Simultaneously, the forest serves readily as a site of human projection and becomes a horror landscape precisely as a result of human psychology. This is seen, for example, in Lars von Trier’s *Antichrist* (2009). The protagonist, known only as “She,” envisages the forest as a manifestation of all her nameless fears: this landscape is, in her words, “*the worst place*.” In this film, we see the forest in her mind before she physically enters the landscape, indicating from the outset that the two forests—the psychological and the physical—are merged. This is emphasized further when, during hypnosis, she imagines herself “melting into the green,” and from this point forward, the forest seems a reflection of her inner psychological turmoil. For instance, she fears she is responsible for the violent death of her son, and, thus, the forest is filled with wild female animals who reject or butcher their young. Similarly, in Wendy Wheeler’s disturbing short story “Little Red” (1993), we see the forest manifest as an outward reflection of an inner state. As the ominous male protagonist, who is a human reconstruction of the Big Bad Wolf, approaches the bed of a child to satiate his desires, the bedroom slowly transforms into a dark and twisted forest.

Harrison, in the title to his seminal work on forests, describes this environment as “*The Shadow of Civilization*” (1992, my emphasis). While this returns us to the first thesis and to this idea that civilization and the forest are one another’s antitheses, it also brings to mind the idea of the Jungian shadow, thus presenting the forest as the darker, more clandestine side of human civilization in the collective unconscious. In one sense, then, civilization becomes analogous to the human “ego” and the forest to the human “id.” One especially recurrent way in which we see this play out in horror is through the envisioning of the forest as a dark repository of the repressed. Chevalier and Gheerbrant contend that “the terrors of the forest are inspired [...] by fears of what the unconscious may reveal” (1969, p. 401). Interestingly, we see this take form in several arboreal horror texts through a literalization of Friedrich Schelling’s definition of the uncanny as something “that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light” (Freud 2003, p. 130). Our vague fears of what lies “beneath” the forest are literalized in subterranean horrors, which are precisely so terrifying because they should, indeed, have remained “secret and hidden.” For example, we have hideous monsters beneath the woods in Klein’s *The Ceremonies*, Laymon’s *The Woods are Dark*, and *The Cabin in the Woods* (2012); we have monstrous pits or holes in forest, which conceal malevolent entities in “*The Transfer*,” *Jug Face*, and *Twin Peaks* (1990–1991, 2017); and we have sinister underground networks beneath the forest in texts such as *Mr Jones*

(2013) and *Jordskott* (2015). Repressed terrors of the unconscious are in these texts literally buried in the woods, and it is their re-emergence—or coming to light—that serves as the source of the horror.

The seventh reason the forest is feared is because it is commonly seen as an *antichristian* space. Though, certainly, we have many instances in which the forest is a site of redemptive and spiritual reverence, we have just as many examples in which the forest is shown to be a wicked, ungodly, and profane landscape of sin. The woods are revealed, time and again in our horror fictions, as specifically *against* Christianity.⁵ Hayman argues that prevalent understandings of Christianity and its history have—in predominantly negative ways—strongly influenced how we see the forest (2003, p. 39). Indeed, Christianity has been widely blamed for our generally negative attitudes toward nature. Lynn White famously locates “the roots of our ecological crisis” in the Bible, which he argues sanctions “unlimited human power over the rest of creation” and demonizes the wilderness, leading him to claim that “Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has ever seen” (1967). Though White’s claims have been widely condemned and discredited (he has been deemed, in harsher instances, as “critically illiterate”), the idea that Christianity is responsible for our adverse and even sinister visions of nature has achieved something of a cult status in the Western world (Hiers 1984, p. 45; McGrath 2002, p. xv). In the popular imagination, Christianity has objectified and eschewed the wilderness, which it has deemed the profane and dangerous site of illicit Paganism: the religion against which Christianity is commonly understood to be defined.⁶ It is common conjecture that “the Bible,” as Roderick Frazier Nash asserts, “contains everything you need to know in order to hate the wilderness” (2001, p. 133). Consequently, it is little wonder that, when we encounter the forest in horror, there is often the sense that this environment is a “landscape of fear” because it is a specifically *antichristian* environment.

The story of the Garden of Eden is of particular relevance here, not only because adherents of “the Lynn White thesis” tend to focus exclusively on Genesis but also because the antichristian forest is often rendered specifically as a *perverted version of Eden*. This story, moreover, provides us with an especially relevant example of some of the ways in which religion can define and divide the landscape into “good” and “bad” space. “Religion,” according to Mircea Eliade, “is about creating and maintaining a sacred cosmic *order* amidst *chaos*”; it is about creating a meaningful “centre” amidst the infinite expanses of space and thus dividing said space into that which is ordered and sacred and that which is disordered and profane (Eliade 1959, p. 20). Jürgen Moltmann, building on Eliade’s ideas, describes the traditional characteristics of sacred space: he argues that sacred space is “always enclosed,” “always removed from virgin nature,” and “always subject to the order and rules of human civilization” (1985, p. 142). Profane space, in contrast, as Eliade writes, is a space with no obvious center, in which “no orientation is possible” (p. 21). The forest, as a site of *lostness*, conforms to this description. Indeed, if enclosed, ordered, and colonized spaces are sacred, then the forest, which is exposed,

wild, and predominantly uninhabited, is the opposite. The story of Eden presents us not only with instances of sacred and profane space, but with examples of perfect and imperfect versions of the natural world. The eponymous Garden of Eden is of course the archetypal image of godly and idyllic nature, which importantly, is a wholly ordered and cultivated paradise: it is explicitly a *garden* and not a wilderness. Despite its ostensible perfection, however, Eden is, of course, home to The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, at which Eve is tempted by Satan. There are, thus, Gothic elements within this tale: the tree is a portentous metonym of the Deep Dark Forest, and we learn that the Devil resides here. This idea of the forest Devil as a dark alternative to the Christian God is seen in several horror texts: in *Antichrist*, it is suggested that the woods are the domain of *the* antichrist, and we are told that “nature is Satan’s church,” in the twisted, blasphemous, and satanic deities, such as the terrifying “God of the Lost” in King’s *The Girl that Loved Tom Gordon* (1999); and in “Young Goodman Brown,” *Darkest Desire*, and *The Witch*, we literally meet the Devil in the woods. Moreover, the story of Eden provides us with an origin story in Christian thought for “dark” or “bad” nature. Disordered nature, in the form of wilderness, is only created with the downfall of humanity. The consequence of transgression is expulsion from the ordered paradise *into* the disordered wild. In *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture* (2003), Carolyn Merchant argues that there is a tenacious obsession in the Western world with regaining biblical paradise (2003). This is due, as McGrath continues, to the idea that we are collectively “homesick for a lost Eden” (2002, p. 184). The desire to “recreate Eden” in a postlapsarian world, however, as Kevin Corstorphine argues, is inevitably based on a “flawed model” (2013, p. 125). Furthermore, this idea of a recreated Eden on Earth is, as he continues, one that is “ripe with Gothic possibilities” (p. 125). Hence it is that we encounter the forest as a twisted or inverted version of idyllic, sacred, and ordered nature and find it reliant, in its darkness, on its Edenic antithesis. What *seems* the Edenic idyll in the woods in horror often transpires, in fact, to be a nightmare: a transition we find repeatedly in the multitude of “cabin in the woods” texts in the genre. In addition, the archetypal images from the biblical story—the man, the woman, the snake, the tree, the fruit—are frequently present in arboreal horror, but they are, as David Bell attests, “made poisonous” (2005, p. 104). In the context of these ideas, it is, perhaps, unsurprising to note that many of our horror texts set in the woods are set in America and allude, either explicitly or implicitly, to the Puritans of the New World. These early settlers famously had an extremely complicated relationship with nature: they saw the expansive forests of America simultaneously as a “virtual Eden” and as a monstrous wilderness (Blanton 1997, p. 190). Here, they believed they could be “new Adams” and yet, as Smith and Hughes note, for many “entering the wilderness was tantamount to confronting the nightmarish landscape of Original Sin” (2013, p. 9).⁷ Indeed, in several horror texts set in the US, such as *The Ceremonies*, *The Witch*, *Jug Face*, and *The Village*, we find Puritans—or Puritan-like communities—seeking to establish in the woods

Eden-like alternatives to modern existence, only to discover that, deep in the forest, God has abandoned them and is replaced by sinister, blasphemous, and monstrous alternatives.

CONCLUSION

In the current climate of ever-increasing environmental destruction, it is more important than ever that we question and explore our relationship with the natural world from a variety of interdisciplinary perspectives. This includes examining the ways in which we portray and read the environment as portrayed in fiction. In an age in which, as Sarah L. Crosby argues, “horror is now the environmental norm,” it is especially important to understand our ecophobic representations of nature (Crosby 2014, p. 514; Estok 2009, p. 203). The forest, as we have seen, is one of our archetypal “landscapes of fear,” which is continually presented as a site of trial, trepidation, tribulation, and terror (Tuan 1975, p. 5). We can see through recent trends in popular culture—such as with the reboots of *Twin Peaks*, *Evil Dead*, and *Blair Witch*—that the Deep Dark Forest is a perennially and increasingly popular setting in horror. This chapter has highlighted this fact, and, moreover, it has interrogated the reasons *why* we continue to fear the woods in the modern age. Through the “Seven Theses”—the forest is the imagined *antithesis* to civilization; the forest is bound to our fears of the *past*; the forest is a site of gruesome *trial*; the forest is the space in which we are *lost*; the forest is the space in which we are *eaten*; the forest is the manifestation of the human *unconscious*; and the forest is an *antichristian* environment—this chapter has presented a model with which we may begin to read, understand, and deconstruct the Big Bad Woods.

NOTES

1. Hayman, here, lifts the line “the echoing green” from William Blake’s famous poem of the same name (1789).
2. Lyle and Marie McCann, for example, went missing in the Canadian woods in 2010 and were never found. In August of 2015, a British man named Geoff Keys took a wrong turn in the Australian wilderness and was only found two full days after his reported disappearance (Akkok 2015).
3. The fact that there are several cases in which the forest is used as a site in which to conceal cadavers has created its own interesting mythologies. For example, in the recent podcast *Serial* (2014), which follows the true story of the unsolved murder of a teenage girl, we are told that her body was found in some woods named Leakin Park. These woods are infamous as a site for concealing cadavers, to such an extent that one local, who is interviewed about them, remarks, “if you’re digging in Leakin Park to bury your body, you’re gonna find someone else’s: that’s Leakin Park.” Similarly, in *Cropsey* (2009)—a documentary that examines the mystery “bogeyman” figure, “Cropsey,” who allegedly lives in the woods of Staten Island and murders local children—we learn that there are prevalent rumors in the nearby towns that the woods are filled with the bodies of missing persons.

4. In *The Witch*, the protagonist is tempted by the Devil thus: “wouldst thou like to live deliciously?”
5. I use the word “Christianity” here in its very broad sense, as what Noël Carroll has termed a “cultural myth.” I am concerned solely with the *interpretation* of Christianity in relation to the forest in the popular imagination, as opposed to the intricacies of this hugely complex and extensive religion.
6. Though very little is actually known about Pagans, one of the most prevalent ideas is that they were “priests of nature” and specifically “forest-dwellers.” Though sometimes romanticized—as we see reflected in the contemporary movement of neopaganism—a common image is that of the “demonic Druid” performing savage rites in the woods. Such images are, of course, suited to horror, and we see them exploited in a number of texts, as, for example, in *The Ceremonies*, the title of which is inspired by the dark and mysterious rites and ceremonies of Paganism.
7. In addition, the so-called Indians of the forest were terrifying to many, serving as monstrous denizens of the woods. Interestingly, Renée Bergland (2000), in her work, has introduced the idea of “the spectral native,” which refers to the vague allusions to the Indians and the New World’s troubled histories in American fiction. We have an example of this in M. Night Shyamalan’s *The Village* (2004), in which the fearsome forest creatures—“those we don’t speak of”—serve symbolically as demonized natives to the settled community, which in many ways evokes the Puritan settlements of the New World.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Akkok, Raziye. 2015. British Adventurer Lost for Two Days in the Australian Outback after Taking a Wrong Turn. *The Telegraph*, August 25. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/australiaandthepacific/australia/11819133/British-adventurer-lost-for-two-days-in-the-Australian-outback-after-taking-wrong-turn.html>. Accessed December 9, 2015.
- Alaimo, Stacey. 2001. Discomforting Creatures: Monstrous Natures in Recent Films. In *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism*, ed. Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace, 279–296. Virginia: The University Press of Virginia.
- Antichrist*. 2009. Directed by Lars von Trier. Hvidovre Municipality, Denmark: Zentropa Entertainments, DVD.
- Appleton, Jay. 1996. *The Experience of Landscape*. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.
- Bachelard, Gaston. 1958. *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places*. Massachusetts: Beacon Press.
- Barry, Peter. 2002. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Bate, Jonathan. 1991. *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*. London: Routledge.
- Bell, David. 2005. Anti-idyll Rural Horror. In *Contested Countryside Cultures: Otherness, Marginalisation and Rurality*, ed. Paul Cloke and Jo Little, 94–108. London: Routledge.
- Benchley, Peter. 1998. Swimming with Sharks. *Audubon* 100 (3): 52–57.
- Bergland, Renée L. 2000. *The National Uncanny: Indian Ghosts and American Subjects*. Dartmouth: University Press of New England.

- Blackwood, Algernon. 1912. *Pan's Garden: A Volume of Nature Stories*. London: Macmillan.
- The Blair Witch Project*. 2003. Directed by Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez. Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox, DVD.
- Blanton, Dennis B. 1997. 'The Weather is Fine, Wish You Were Here, Because I'm the Last One Alive': 'Learning' the Environment in the English New World Colonies. In *The Colonization of Unfamiliar Landscapes*, ed. Marcy Rockman and James Steele, 190–199. London: Routledge.
- The Cabin in the Woods*. 2012. Directed by Drew Goddard. Los Angeles, CA: Mutant Enemy Productions, DVD.
- Chevalier, Jean, and Alain Gheerbrant. 1969. *A Dictionary of Symbols*. London: Penguin Books Limited.
- Clover, Carol J. 1992. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. 1996. *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Corstorphine, Kevin. 2013. 'The Blank Darkness Outside': Ambrose Bierce and Wilderness Gothic at the End of the Frontier. In *EcoGothic*, ed. Andrew Smith and William Hughes, 120–133. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Cropsey*. 2009. Directed by Joshua Zeman. United States: Antidote Films.
- Crosby, Sara L. 2014. Beyond Ecophilia: Edgar Allan Poe and the American Tradition of Ecohorror. *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment* 21 (3): 513–525.
- Day, William Patrick. 1985. *In the Circles of Fear and Desire: A Study of Gothic Fantasy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Descartes, René. 2008. *Discourse on the Method*. Trans. John Veitch. New York: Cosimo Inc.
- Eliade, Mircea. 1959. *The Sacred and the Profane; The Nature of Religion; The Significance of Religious Myth, Symbolism, and Ritual within Life and Culture*. New York: Harcourt.
- Estok, Simon C. 2009. Theorizing in a Space of Ambivalent Openness: Ecocriticism and Ecophobia. *International Studies in Literature and the Environment* 16 (4): 203–225.
- Evil Dead*. 2013. Directed by Fede Alvarez. Culver City, CA: TriStar Pictures, DVD.
- Freud, Sigmund. 2003. *The Uncanny*. Ed. Adam Phillips and trans. David McLintock. London: Penguin Books.
- Ganz, Shoshanna. 2013. Margaret Atwood's Monsters in the Canadian EcoGothic. In *EcoGothic*, ed. Andrew Smith and William Hughes, 87–102. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Golledge, Reginald G. 2003. Human Wayfinding and Cognitive Maps. In *Colonisation of Unfamiliar Landscapes: Archaeology of Adaptation*, ed. Marcy Rockman and James Steele, 25–43. London: Routledge.
- Harrison, Robert Pogue. 1992. *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Hayman, Richard. 2003. *Trees, Woodland and Civilisation*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hiers, Richard. 1984. Ecology, Biblical Theology, and Methodology: Biblical Perspectives on the Environment. *Zygon* 19: 43–59.

- Hutchings, Peter. 1996. Tearing Your Soul Apart: Horror's New Monsters. In *Modern Gothic: A Reader*, ed. Victor Sage and Allan Lloyd-Smith, 89–103. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Klein, T.E.D. 1984. *The Ceremonies*. New York: Viking Press.
- Maitland, Sara. 2012. *Gossip from the Forest: The Tangled Roots of Our Forest*. London: Granta Books.
- McDonald, Rick. 2013. Sacred Violence and *The Cabin in the Woods*. *Slayage: The Journal of the Joss Whedon Studies Association*. <http://www.whedonstudies.tv/volume-11.html>. Accessed January 12, 2017.
- McGrath, Alister. 2002. *The Reenchantment of Nature: The Denial of Religion and the Ecological Crisis*. New York: Doubleday.
- Melbye, David. 2010. *Landscape Allegory in Cinema: From Wilderness to Wasteland*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Merchant, Carolyn. 2003. *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Moltmann, Jürgen. 1985. *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*. London: SCM Press.
- Morgan, Sally J. 2001. Heritage Noire: Truth, History and Colonial Anxiety in *The Blair Witch Project*. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 7 (2): 137–148.
- Morton, Timothy. 2007. *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Nash, Roderick Frazier. 2001. *Wilderness and the American Mind*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Plumwood, Val. 1993. *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. London: Routledge.
- Porteous, Alexander. 2012. *The Forest in Folklore and Mythology*. New York: Macmillan.
- Rogin, Michael. 1991. *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the Indian*. Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Sage, Victor, and Allan Lloyd Smith. 1996. *Modern Gothic: A Reader*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Serial. 2014. Produced by Sarah Koenig and Julie Snyder. Podcast Audio.
- Smith, Andrew, and William Hughes. 2013. *Introduction to EcoGothic*, 1–14. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Sondheim, Stephen. 1986. *Into the Woods*. Musical.
- Spufford, Francis. 2002. *The Child that Books Built*. London: Faber and Faber Limited.
- Strayed, Cheryl. 2012. *Wild: A Journey from Lost to Found*. London: Atlantic Books.
- Tuan, Yi-fu. 1975. *Landscapes of Fear*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher.
- . 1977. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press.
- The Village*. 2004. Directed by M. Night Shyamalan. Burbank, CA: Touchstone Pictures, DVD.
- White, Lynn. 1967. The Historical Roots of Our Environmental Crisis. *Science* 155: 1203–1207.
- Wild*. 2014. Directed by Jean-Marc Vallée. Century City, CA: Fox Searchlight Pictures, DVD.
- Williamson, J.W. 1995. *Hillbillyland*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press.
- The Witch*. 2016. Directed by Robert Eggers. New York: A24, DVD.



Disability and Horror

Alan Gregory

During a presentation at the Inaugural Conference of the Cultural Disability Studies Research Network at Liverpool John Moores University on May 26, 2007, a presentation that signaled the inception of the *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*, David Bolt suggested that, despite the growth of Disability Studies as a scholastic discipline at the close of the twentieth century, it frequently remained absent from literary criticism (Bolt 2007, pp. 2–3). Despite a sustained proliferation of figurations of corporeal otherness in literary horror, the absence of disability that Bolt notes in literary criticism also extends to criticism in Gothic and Horror Studies. Gothic literature is full of monstrous and unusual bodies but has hitherto been largely neglected by the swiftly emerging field of disability studies. In the introduction to *Horror: A Literary History* (2016), Xavier Aldana Reyes overtly acknowledges the inherent complexities that are woven into the landscape of fear cultivated by horror’s rich literary and cultural lineage and asserts that the genre’s scope extends beyond a specific collection of figures and conventions assigned to horror: “[A]lthough we may readily associate the genre with specific characters or creatures—including spiritual visitations, mad scientists, monsters from the deep, blood-sucking aristocrats, perverse serial killers, the undead, lycanthropes, mutations of the atom age ... these alone are not sufficient to guarantee generic allegiance” (Aldana Reyes 2016, p. 8). Although Aldana Reyes gestures toward horror’s penchant for departing from cultural configurations of corporeal normativity through his acknowledgment of freak shows as a trope of contemporary horror, the partial nature of his survey of the figures that populate literary horror

A. Gregory (✉)
Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK

is evidenced by the absence of disability. This absence is also reflected critically through the sparsity of scholarly considerations of disability in literary horror.

The Gothic's uncomfortable conflation of disability with monstrosity creates a binary opposition between two cultural extremes through the presentation of the disabled body as either an object of public spectacle or private seclusion. The Gothic thereby offers an unlikely, radical space in which representations of disabilities can be renegotiated. Research on the representation of disability in Gothic fiction and film has been published infrequently. One of the few instances of a scholarly exploration of the intersection includes Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's examination of disability in Toni Morrison's fiction, published as part of the monograph, *Extraordinary Bodies* (1997). David Punter subsequently began the process of establishing a relationship between disability and the Gothic more consciously in his article, "A foot is what fits the shoe" (2000). More recently, disability has been recognized as a trope of the Gothic by Martha Stoddard Holmes, through its inclusion in *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic* (2013). It is also notable that David Bolt's integration of a sample of Stephen King's short fiction into *The Metanarrative of Blindness* (2014) positions him in dialogue with a significant contemporary exponent of the Gothic (although the text he uses, *The Langoliers* (1990) is characterized as a work of science fiction). King also figures in the research of other disability studies scholars, including Ria Cheyne (2013), who has previously argued for King's reclamation by disability studies. Despite the publication of these isolated investigations of the relationship cultivated between disability and the Gothic and literary horror, Ruth Bienstock Anolik's edited collection, *Demons of the Body and Mind* (2010), remains the only sustained exploration of the dialogue between Disability Studies and the Gothic or horror.

The Gothic and horror exhibit shared cultural fixation with departures from configurations of physical normativity, from the contours of the exaggerated corporeal shapes embodied by the hunchbacked bell-ringer of Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831), a figure whose name, Quasimodo, represents a symbolic gesture toward the half-formed nature of his monstrous physicality, to the incomplete disabled bodies created through the amputations endured by multiple protagonists in King's contemporary horror fiction, including Paul Sheldon of *Misery* (1987), Edgar Freemantle of *Duma Key* (2009), and Odetta Holmes of *The Drawing of the Three* (1987). The second installment of King's seven-novel cycle, *The Dark Tower*, draws on several other Gothic motifs more explicitly than its predecessor, a transition that mirrors the increasingly Gothicized nature of the territories that Roland negotiates to complete his pilgrimage. James Egan initially recognizes King's gestures toward the Gothic motif of the double in *The Gunslinger* through the antagonism cultivated between Roland and the Man in Black, suggesting that, "The Gunslinger and the Man in Black appear different at first, yet they eventually prove quite similar. Each has information and powers that the other desires. Roland tries to shoot the Man in Black, but [is warned] that [he] cannot do so without killing himself" (Egan 1987, p. 101). Following the climactic parlay between Roland Deschain and the Man in Black at the close of *The Gunslinger*, King absents the

Gunslinger's nemesis from *The Drawing of the Three*. The Gothic motif of doubling is, however, sustained by King through his introduction of another figure who embodies an alternative model of duplicity; schizophrenic double-leg amputee, Odetta Holmes. As Heidi Strengell explains, "*The Drawing of the Three* introduces a dissociative patient, Odetta Holmes/Detta Walker.... Her two personalities—the sophisticated and wealthy Odetta Holmes and the uneducated and vulgar Detta—lead separate lives, completely unaware of each other" (Strengell 2007, p. 72). Odetta's multiplicity, manifest in Dissociative Personality Disorder, and the sporadic appearances of her aggressive alternate, Detta Walker, which renders her a configuration of the Gothic double, is not, however, her only function in King's text. Odetta's immobility also mirrors the kinetic pause in Roland Deschain's quest for the Dark Tower.

While King's Dark Tower series is broadly conceptualized as a sustained migration toward a Gothic landmark, *The Drawing of the Three* presents a lapse in Roland's movement toward the tower as he pauses on the Beach of the Western Sea to form the allegiances required in order for him to complete his quest. The transitional phase in Roland's travels does, however, still depend on a different model of mobility to facilitate the Gunslinger's acquisition of the confederates that will ultimately support him for the remainder of his migration toward the Gothic site of the Dark Tower. Roland's expedition is disrupted by the presence of three doors, each of which opens onto New York at a variant point in history, necessitating a form of travel fulfilled by the Gunslinger's presence in the minds of the individuals whom he is compelled to draw from the keystone world of New York into the dusty and desolate territories of Mid-World. Roland's motion in New York, facilitated by him becoming an unwelcome passenger within the minds of a discriminately selected group of citizens, is, however, not mirrored corporeally. The Gunslinger's passage through each doorway leaves his body behind, lying prone on King's beachscape, vulnerable to the lobsterosities that have already consumed the trigger fingers of his right hand. Roland, therefore, becomes an emblem of a dichotomy that King constructs between mobility and immobility. Ultimately, however, he is displaced in that symbolic role by Odetta, the Gunslinger's second accomplice, drawn from 1964 New York, through a door labeled, "The Lady of Shadows."

After successfully drawing heroin addict Eddie Dean into Mid-World through the first door, labeled "The Prisoner," Roland turns his attention to civil rights activist Odetta, a black disabled woman inhabiting a New York irrevocably altered by Mrs. Rosa Parks's declaration that she was not moving—an act of rebellion, which transcended stigmatization by a prevailing set of cultural norms. Such cultural archetypes coded as attributes present along an axis of visual difference, which departed from perceived universal standards of normativity, manifest in variant configurations of gender, ethnicity, and disability, as undesirable. In *Extraordinary Bodies* (1997), a seminal study of configurations of physical disability in American literature and culture, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson asserts that:

Many parallels exist between the social meanings attributed to female bodies and those assigned to disabled bodies. Both the female and the disabled body are cast as deviant and inferior; both are excluded from full participation in public as well as economic life; both are defined in opposition to a norm that is assumed to possess natural physical superiority. (Garland-Thomson 1997, p. 19)

The markers of the female body and the disabled body that contribute to their cultural definition as inferior, in fulfillment of a prescribed polarity between normative and non-normative corporealities, also extend to an incorporation of the black disabled female body, which departs from Darwinian notions of absolute beauty. As Garland-Thomson suggests:

The normative female—the figure of the beautiful woman—is the narrowly prescribed opposite of the ideal male ... The normative female body ... occupies a dual and paradoxical cultural role: it is the negative term opposing the male body, but it is also simultaneously the privileged term opposing the abnormalized female body ... scientific discourse conceived [of an] anatomical state of beauty as simultaneously one of pathology. The further a female body departs from absolute beauty, the more abnormal it became. The markers of this indubitable pathology were traits like dark skin and physical disability. (Garland-Thomson 1997, p. 28)

This critical recognition of specific markers of gender, race, and disability being coded as signs of deviance and undesirability is initially sustained by Stephen King in his presentation of Odetta Holmes, a woman who simultaneously embodies all three elements of the trinity of visual difference that Garland-Thomson suggests are culturally defined as inferior.

Odetta inhabits an American metropolis that remains in a state transition following Rosa Parks's adamant proclamation, "I'm not moving," and her incrementally more active participation in the African American Civil Rights Movement functions as a gesture by King toward the continuing influence of Mrs. Parks's seminal act of empowerment. Despite her involvement with the civil rights movement and resistance of racial discrimination, Odetta remains broadly characterized as a passive figure who is adherent to three different forms of visual difference within one body. Odetta's passivity is, however, challenged by the intermittent emergence of her alternate personality. Detta Walker is the product of an act of violence exacted by the serial killer, Jack Mort, the man ultimately revealed to be behind the third door standing on the Beach of the Western Sea, labeled "The Pusher." Mort is a sociopathic figure who takes sadistic pleasure in killing and injuring strangers. His seemingly motiveless crimes are designed primarily to create chaos and include being the architect of the head trauma that births Detta Walker by dropping a brick on a five-year old Odetta Holmes's head. Mort is also the agent of the infliction of Odetta's physical disability 20 years later, pushing her in front of the subway train that severs both of her legs.

The Gothic and horror are two inexorably linked cultural modes that cannot present disability without evoking discourses of monstrosity. Disability has often been deployed as a melodramatic device that functions as a visible marker of Otherness, leaving it susceptible to Gothic modes of cultural appropriation. Among the most persistent is the association of disability with evil and wrongdoing (Garland-Thomson 1997). Physical disability is thereby frequently refigured as an emblem of evil. Paul K. Longmore (2003) provides categorizations of disabled representation in his essay, "Screening Stereotypes." Despite focusing specifically on the representation of disability in visual mediums of film and television to facilitate his symbolic categorizations of disabled figures, several of Longmore's assertions pertaining to the representation of disabled figures as an emblem of evil, or of monstrosity, also manifest in literary horror. Longmore's suggestion, for instance, that the depiction in horror stories of the disabled person as monster highlights fear and loathing of people with disabilities as a subtext of many horror films directly correlates with various representations of physically disabled people in literary horror (Longmore 2003, p. 131).

The term "super-crip," very broadly, is used in disability studies as a shorthand for narratives that feature a disabled protagonist who rises above the challenges brought about by their condition. According to Martha Stoddard Holmes, one of the most prominent Gothic super-crips is Mason Verger of *Hannibal* (1999) because his body is enhanced through the use of technological prosthetics, rendering him a "cyborg-Gothic figure" (Stoddard Holmes 2013). The presentation of Verger's disabled body in *Hannibal* marks a significant departure from the configurations of disability displayed in Thomas Harris's earlier fiction. Philip L. Simpson, for instance, presents blind woman Reba McClane, of *Red Dragon* (1981), as an erotic figure by gesturing toward Francis Dolarhyde's sexual arousal upon witnessing the sensory stimulation she experiences by stroking a sedated tiger (Simpson 2010). Although the creature is symbolic of Dolarhyde's dormant homicidal impulse, Reba's affinity for the tiger also emphasizes her eroticization by coding her as synonymous with the exotic qualities of the sleeping beast. Consequently, she becomes a touchstone of the Blakean motifs that permeate Harris's *Hannibal* Lecter trilogy. In contrast to Reba's presentation as an erotic figure, Mason Verger's disabled body functions as a corporeal manifestation of his impotence and an index of his compromised masculinity. Ultimately, the machinic extraction of Verger's sperm by his sister, Margot, functions as a mechanization of his reproductive impulses. By gradually reconfiguring Verger's body as a machinic organism, Harris presents a model of monstrous hybridity that challenges the super-crip trope by privileging the physical weaknesses of the cyborg body. Furthermore, a figure like Verger represents a departure from a prospective cultural configuration of the cyborg as Superhuman because his disability adheres to Longmore and Garland-Thompson's shared association of physical disability with evil, an idea that extends to figures like Harry Peake of Patrick McGrath's *Martha Peake* (2000) and Edith Mason of Adam Nevill's *House of Small Shadows* (2013).

The behavioral abhorrence exhibited by this collection of literary figures is another component of Longman's "monster" categorization of disabled individuals in cultural narratives, which suggests that "the depiction of the disabled person as 'monster' ... [expresses] to varying degrees the notion that disability involves the loss of an essential part of one's humanity" (Longmore 2003, p. 135). Despite the frequency with which physical disability continues to elicit an adverse emotional response in literary horror, there are several figurations of the disabled body in literary horror that challenge negative cultural perceptions of physical difference. As I have argued elsewhere, Harry Peake of McGrath's *Martha Peake* utilizes performance: "Harry's display of his physically disabled body is prioritized over his poetic sensibility, and the temporary and fragile nature of his poetic masquerade [manifests] in his behavior: alcohol removes Harry's mask of heightened sensitivity, leading to a behavioral monstrosity that corresponds to cultural perceptions of his disabled body" (Gregory 2015, pp. 149–50). McGrath's overtly metaphorical utilization of Harry Peake's physical disability as emblematic of a form of social monstrosity is facilitated by the endurance of his misshapen physicality, which does not extend to his temporarily performed masquerade of poetic sentimentality.

The behavioral monstrosity that McGrath conveys through atypical corporeal shapes is echoed in Adam Nevill's representation of the disabled female body in *House of Small Shadows*. Nevill appropriates a Dickensian Gothic aesthetic, an idea most overtly displayed in his mirroring of Dickens's decaying spinster, Miss Havisham, in his presentation of Edith Mason. Both women are presented as fleshy relics and curators of the shadows of a past that has been deliberately memorialized in the present. Nevill extends the temporal stasis that Dickens manufactures in *Great Expectations*, emphasizing Edith Mason's immobility further by presenting her within the confines of a wheelchair, a mark of reduced mobility, which, as Brenda Jo Brueggemann contends, "remains the most frequently used symbol of disability in all its diverse forms" (as cited in Hall 2015, p. 59). Nevill, thereby, gestures toward the overt markers of physical disability as external indicators of Edith's malevolent dominion over The Red House, despite her evident physical vulnerability.

Nevill's inaugural presentation of Edith Mason within the confines of the Red House, specifically the parameters of the drawing room, is significant because of Nevill's textual replication of Pip's first introduction to Miss Havisham within the decaying interiors of Satis House:

Catherine thought she'd walked into another world. An enchanted but nightmarish glade of an artificial Victorian forest. One in which scores of small bright eyes watched her from every surface they had clambered upon. Speechless, Catherine turned about. And saw red squirrels in frock coats paused in the eating of nuts upon the piano. She looked away and a fox grinned at her from the low table it stalked across. A company of rats in khaki uniforms all stood on their hind legs on parade on the mantel ... Animals cluttered the room, all silent and still with what felt like caution at her intrusion, or perhaps they were paused in anticipation of their next moves. Not a square foot of any surface was free of them. (Nevill 2013, pp. 38–9)

The various taxidermied figures—artificially positioned and created to form part of an artificially choreographed visual legacy bequeathed to Edith by her ancestor M.H. Mason—manufacture an identical illusion of arrested time that casts a shadow over Satis House in *Great Expectations*. Furthermore, just as Dickens incarcerates Miss Havisham's ruined corpus within the interior landscapes of her domestic sphere, Adam Nevill's presentation of Edith Mason's immobility, like that of Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations*, adorns her with various doll-like qualities that are further exaggerated by her representation as a corporeal ruin within the confines of her wheelchair, which continues to function as a symbol of her immobility, heightened by her incarceration within a domestic space presented as equitably immobile.

The Gothic's representation of disability as monstrous is more overtly challenged is Katharine Dunn's *Geek Love* (1989). Aloysius Binewski's chemically created nuclear family of grotesque freaks, particularly prodigal son Arturo the Aqua Boy, are revered for their deformities. As David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder suggest in *Narrative Prosthesis*, "Arty not only embraces the 'terror' that his physical aberrancy inspires in audiences, but he fosters a philosophy that makes his own physical condition the site of desirability" (Mitchell and Snyder 2000, p. 156). Arturo's conception of the quasi-religious cult Arturism, of which he is the deity, is defined by its deliberate subversion of cultural constructions of physical difference as a source of horror.

Despite the Arturans's collective worship of their perfectly imperfect God, Arturo Binewski is ultimately unable to escape being portrayed as a monster. Indeed, more than any other disabled Gothic figure, he actively seeks to construct himself as a monster: "Do you know what the monsters and demons and rancid spirits are? Us, that's what. You and me. We are the things that come to the norms in nightmares. The thing that lurks in the bell tower and bites out the throats of the choirboys.... And the thing in the closet that babies scream in the dark before it sucks their last breath—that's me" (Dunn 2006, p. 152). Arty's recognition of the various narrative and cultural representations of corporeal monstrosity, which Rosemarie Garland-Thomson identifies as forms of visual novelty and exaggerations of the normative shape and scale of the human anatomy, stimulate the impulse to stare. In *Staring: How We Look* (2009), Garland-Thomson presents an extensive consideration of a variety of spectacular bodies, while also emphasizing that encounters with bodies of extraordinary scale are often the catalyst for the act of staring to develop a storied quality. Arty's perception of his own freakishness and, by extension, his status as an embodiment of corporeal horror is significant because it is dependent upon an embrace of his monstrosity. As Catherine Spooner suggests, "*Geek Love* demonstrates a shift in sensibilities. The monster is no longer the other" (Spooner 2006, p. 72). Instead, the Arturans's collective submission to various forms of radical body modification is motivated by a fear of normativity.

The bombastic performances of corporeally exaggerated figures, such as Arturo Binewski in the contemporary narratives of literary horror in *Geek Love*, anticipate the celebratory tone that Spooner subsequently attributes to post-

millennial Gothic (Spooner 2017, p. 17). Arturo's celebratory mode of performance facilitates an embrace of monstrosity that is facilitated by positive reconfiguration of physical disabilities as desirable exceptionalities. The Gothic and horror are, therefore, both modes of representation that facilitate a reconfiguration of the disabled body while simultaneously refusing a separation from monstrosity. Horror fiction, thereby, remains dependent upon the utilization of monstrosity as a discursive lens through which to approach the cultural representation of disability.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aldana Reyes, Xavier. 2016. Introduction: What, Why and When is Horror Fiction? In *Horror: A Literary History*, ed. Xavier Aldana Reyes, 7–17. London: The British Library.
- Bolt, David. 2007. *Literary Disability Studies: The Long Awaited Response*. Unpublished Conference Paper, *The Inaugural Conference of the Cultural Disability Studies Research Network*. Paper presented at Liverpool John Moores University, May 26. <http://disability-studies.leeds.ac.uk/files/library/bolt-Long-Awaited-Response.pdf>. Accessed May 31, 2017.
- . 2014. *The Metanarrative of Blindness: A Re-Reading of Twentieth-Century Anglophone Writing*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Cheyne, Ria. 2013. *Fearful Bodies, Fearful Minds: Disability and Horror*. Paper presented at *Avoidance in/and the Academy: The International Conference on Disability, Culture and Education*, Liverpool Hope University, September 11–12.
- Dunn, Katharine. 2006. *Geek Love*. London: Abacus.
- Egan, James. 1987. The Dark Tower: Stephen King's Gothic Western. In *The Gothic World of Stephen King*, ed. Ray B. Browne and Gary Hoppenstand, 95–106. Bowling Green: Popular Press.
- Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. 1997. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- . 2009. *Staring: How We Look*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gregory, Alan. 2015. Staging the Extraordinary Body: Masquerading Disability in Patrick McGrath's *Martha Peake*. In *Technologies of the Gothic in Literature and Culture: Technogothics*, ed. Justin D. Edwards, 141–153. London: Routledge.
- Hall, Alice. 2015. *Literature and Disability: Contemporary Critical Thought*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Longmore, Paul K. 2003. Screening Stereotypes: Images of Disabled People in TV and Motion Pictures. In *Why I Burned My Book and Other Essays on Disability*, 131–146. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Mitchell, David T., and Sharon L. Snyder. 2000. *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Nevill, Adam. 2013. *House of Small Shadows*. London: Pan.
- Punter, David. 2000. A Foot is What Fits the Shoe: Disability, the Gothic and Prosthesis. *Gothic Studies* 2 (1): 39–49.
- Simpson, Philip L. 2010. *Making Murder: The Fiction of Thomas Harris*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Spooner, Catherine. 2006. *Contemporary Gothic*. London: Reaktion.

- . 2017. *Post-Millennial Gothic: Comedy, Romance and the Rise of Happy Gothic*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Stoddard Holmes, Martha. 2013. Disability. In *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, ed. William Hughes, David Punter, and Andrew Smith. Blackwell Publishing. Blackwell Reference Online. http://www.literatureencyclopedia.com.ezproxy.lancs.ac.uk/subscriber/tocnode.html?id=g9781405182904_chunk_g97814051829046_ss1-4. Accessed May 31, 2017.
- Strengell, Heidi. 2007. *Stephen King: Monsters Live in Ordinary People: The Novels and Stories of Stephen King*. London: Duckworth Overlook.



Monstrous Machines and Devilish Devices

Gwyneth Peaty

From everyday communication between individuals to large-scale military operations, the presence of machinery has become essential to human activities across the globe. People carry pieces of technology wherever they go—both in their pockets and inside their bodies. And yet, the inner workings of these instruments remain an enigma to most. Their implacable surfaces bedevil our imaginations, even as we become more and more dependent upon them. In 1927, horror maven H.P. Lovecraft famously argued that “the oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown” (2009, para. 1). Despite the current ubiquity of digital media, online networks, and hand-held devices, technology remains a key source of mystery in the twenty-first century. As Brian N. Duchaney points out, if horror emerges from the unknown, “much of what we don’t know is due in part to technological advances” (2015, p. 5). It is therefore no surprise that technology is a key element in horror literature.

Bruno Latour (1987) suggests that opacity surrounding technology is not new, but an ongoing feature of public discourse on the subject. A lack of communication and general understanding regarding the inner workings of systems and machines, he argues, has rendered millions or even billions of people as “outsiders” to scientific knowledge, who “know about science and technology through popularisation only” (1987, p. 15). Most are not participating in designing, building, or coding devices and networks; they just use the end products. Thus, for many people, technology possesses more than a hint of the supernatural. It simply appears, whole and complete, as if the result of modern magic, “fall[ing] on [our] heads like an external fate as foreign, as inhuman, as

G. Peaty (✉)
Curtin University, Perth, WA, Australia

unpredictable as the olden *Fatum* of the Romans” (p. 15). Widespread reliance on technology requires people to place faith in these alien (and at times unstable) entities each day. In the context of biotechnology and cybernetics, treatments and experiments often require us to accept such devices within our bodies, becoming permanently altered by them. Representations of technology in popular narratives reflect the oscillation between fear and desire that is evoked by this dynamic. “In much of our literature and film as well as the press,” observes Kathleen Woodward, “technology is represented as a dystopian nightmare or a utopian promise” (2004, p. 182). Within literature in particular, technological evolutions have given birth to a host of unnaturally sentient horrors, from Mary Shelley’s (1818) “hideous progeny” to psychotic supercomputers.

This chapter explores the ongoing relationship between horror and technology in literature. Beginning with an overview of the historical context, I briefly outline several key themes and texts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, before shifting to consider how twenty-first-century literary horror addresses contemporary machines and networked devices. While biomedicine and post-humanism are important areas of horror in which technology is implicated, these particular concepts are addressed separately in this volume and are thus not explored in great detail here. Instead, this chapter traverses the uneven path toward monstrous machines and devilish devices. These are the tools that infiltrate the most intimate spheres of everyday life, yet resist complete absorption into restful familiarity. They are the telephone that contacts another dimension, the television that doubles as a demonic portal, the computer hoarding your private information, the security camera watching you sleep.

THE SPARK

Technological developments during the Industrial Revolution and the following Information Age have brought about enormous shifts in social, cultural, economic, medical, and political spheres. Each fresh development in technology—from light bulbs and cameras to computers and the World Wide Web—has triggered both hope and fear. This is perhaps inevitable, as each discovery takes us further into the unknown, revealing how easily the fundamental precepts of an era can be overturned. Indeed, Lorna Jowett and Stacey Abbott argue that “new technologies are inherently uncanny because they challenge our established understanding of the natural world” (2013, Chap. 9, para. 3). Technology activates the imagination, raising numerous questions. What strange energies are being harnessed in the depths of the laboratory, the machine, the network? Will these creations enhance our lives, or could they ultimately destroy us? What next? “Many steps in the last few years have been taken upward toward the boundary line that separates the spirit from matter,” mused Isaac K. Funk in 1904:

The phonograph that photographs the voice, the long-distance telephone which enables us to hear the voice of a friend tho [sic] the ocean intervenes, the wireless telegraph which by waves of ether is a prophecy of conversation with the inhabitants on other planets, the *x*-ray giving us power to look through solids, the kinetoscope that helps us to see events of the past in action—where is the end? (1911, p. 5)

The end, of course, is always unknown. But new technologies threaten the seemingly essential categories that order human life, further obscuring an already uncertain future. Woodward points out that “in Western culture there is a long history of the blurring of the boundaries between the animate and the inanimate, a history that in the past three centuries in particular has involved humans and machines” (2004, p. 184). Technology disrupts the perceived borders between spirit and matter, life and death, human and nonhuman. As digital devices assume a pivotal role in everyday life, concern about where technologies are leading us continues to increase, providing horror literature with constant fuel. Science and the supernatural are never far apart in these tales, for both challenge what we understand as possible and natural, conjuring our deepest fears of the unknown (Sconce 2000, pp. 21–58).

One of the most well-known examples of technology in early horror literature is *Frankenstein* (2012). A founding tale in the history of horror, Shelley’s 1818 novel is also, some argue, the very first science fiction novel (Aldiss 1973). Responding to key innovations of the Industrial Revolution, the novel plays out anxieties elicited by science and technology during the early nineteenth century. Protagonist Victor Frankenstein aspires to transcend the known limits of chemistry and biology, embodying the heights of scientific hubris in his dreams of unfettered power. He attempts to master electromagnetic forces; those “new and almost unlimited powers” that allow one to “command the thunders of heaven, mimic the earthquake, even mock the invisible world with its own shadows” (2012, p. 35). Assembling a melange of human remains in his laboratory, he performs the act at last: “I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet” (p. 44). The study of electricity and the nature of “life” was a major preoccupation in the late eighteenth century, as Shelley was well aware. She acknowledges outright that discussions of galvanism (the stimulation of dead muscles using electric current) preceded the dream that inspired Frankenstein: “I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion” (as cited in Ruston 2015). Through this “engine,” life is returned to the dead, an impossible act, facilitated by a hitherto unknown but eminently powerful machine.

For all its tantalizing promise, the achievement of technologically generated life brings only fear and monstrosity in Shelley’s novel. Frankenstein is terrified of his creation: “I had worked hard for nearly two years for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body [...] but now that I had finished, the

beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart” (2012, p. 44). This moment captures the warring relationship between attraction and repulsion that characterizes nineteenth-century views of new technology as simultaneously wonderful and terrifying (Huyssen 1986, pp. 66–70). Frankenstein’s creation reflects the very specific fears of his time in history. As Martin Tropp explains, Frankenstein “manufactures a unique product, a Monster who marries the horrors of Gothic ghosts and spectres to the goal of the Industrial Revolution—science used to imitate and replace man” (1990, p. 30). The relationship between horror, technology, and monstrosity here speaks to the particular cultural context in which the novel is written. Judith Halberstam notes that “monstrosity (and the fear it gives rise to) is historically conditioned rather than a psychological universal” (1995, p. 6). This is an important idea to keep in mind, for while *Frankenstein* has inspired a cavalcade of tales about “mad scientists” and monstrous technology, each horror novel must be seen to emerge from its own historical, technological, and cultural milieu.

Frankenstein’s monster is no simple villain. His abandonment, suffering, and loneliness raise the issue of responsibility. The scientist’s terrible mistreatment of his creation has been read as a source of monstrosity itself within the novel, which explores what it means to be both human and monstrous in the context of new technology (Bann 1994). “The rhetorics of horror,” as Ken Gelder explains, help us to define “what is evil (and what is good) in societies, what is monstrous (and what is ‘normal’), what should be seen (and what should remain hidden), and so on” (2000, p. 1). Tech-based horror traverses such issues in the context of scientific innovation—a constantly evolving set of discoveries, theories, methods, practices, and ethical questions. Such literature explores the moral and spiritual topographies of its time, playing out different scenarios in which cultural values and ideals are tested by the potential capabilities of new technologies. Those who wield these tools are likewise scrutinized. As the nineteenth century progressed, horror literature was an increasingly popular way of exploring the misuse of technology as a horror in itself.

THE TURN

Doctors emerged as iconic human monsters during the Victorian *fin de siècle*; tampering with nature and constructing a myriad of horrors for the sake of scientific innovation. Seismic shifts in technology and culture register clearly within horror literature of this period, in which the uncanny liminality of new technologies were ideally placed to facilitate explorations of human and non-human monstrosity. For instance, in H.G. Wells’s *Island of Dr. Moreau* (2012), written in 1896, the title character performs cruel acts upon living animals in the name of scientific discovery. In his laboratory—known as the “House of Pain”—Dr. Moreau explores “the plasticity of living forms” by slicing creatures open and rearranging their tormented bodies on his table (Chap. 14, para. 12). From these experiments he creates a whole population of so-called beast peo-

ple: “animals carven and wrought into new shapes” (Chap. 14, para. 12). Addressing emerging studies of evolution, biology, and physiology, Wells presents the topical issue of vivisection as both an ethical question for society and a source of creeping horror for readers.

The novella highlights how mechanization and industrial production were transforming the way living bodies were understood at the time. “It is not simply the outward form of an animal which I can change,” brags Dr. Moreau, “the physiology, the chemical rhythm of the creature, may also be made to undergo an enduring modification [...] I was the first man to take up this question armed with antiseptic surgery, and with a really scientific knowledge of the laws of growth” (Chap. 14, para. 13). Framing living bodies as objects whose parts can be forcibly rearranged at will, the doctor’s cruel practices disturb species’ boundaries and challenge the ontological status of the human. His understanding of the body as a collection of moving segments and mechanisms—rather than a single entity with a soul—also illustrates how bodies were increasingly being seen as machine-like through the lens of technological innovation. Fred Botting identifies this shift as an important change. The “self,” he argues, “[was] redefined, along with the natural world, by enlightenment systems of knowledge: rational, individual, moral, this modern being was remade in accordance with the freedoms of bourgeois and industrial modes of production” (2005, para. 16). Because human bodies were “divested of spirit” and imagined as machine-like components in a larger system, they were “able to be utilized economically in the industrial revolution: a technological reduction is put into effect, and with it arise fears of a de-spiritualisation of humanity” (para. 16). As society was increasingly organized along technological rather than religious lines, anxieties emerged regarding the impact of this on spiritual health.

Author Leo Tolstoy linked the spread of new technologies to a degradation of society’s moral compass. “Men of our day,” he notes in 1902, “cannot sufficiently plume themselves on those brilliant, unprecedented, colossal successes which have been won in the technological sphere during the nineteenth century,” [but] “never in history has there been such an example of immoral life, free from any forces that control the animal propensities of man” (p. 21). Technological progress comes, he argues, at the cost of humanity:

There is no dispute that ironclads, railways, book-printing, tunnels, photographs, Rontgen rays, and so forth, are all very fine. They are all very fine, but human lives are also fine, incomparably fine, as Ruskin used to say, those human lives which are pitilessly ruined by the million to purchase ironclads, railroads, tunnels, which do not adorn but disfigure life. (p. 21)

Horror literature of the nineteenth century registered this fear regarding the future of the human by linking technology with both monsters and monstrous behavior. “It is easy to conquer nature,” Tolstoy later notes, “if one is not sparing of human lives” (p. 22).

Along with industrial machinery and automation, devices such as the phonograph, typewriter, and camera were developing a significant domestic presence during the Victorian fin de siècle and as such were features of its horror literature. In Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), for instance, vampirism has been argued to operate "as a stand-in for the uncanny procedures of modern life" (Wicke 1992, p. 473). The novel is consumed with mass media and newly emerging technologies of production, which form the essence of this contagious specter. "Mass culture is protean," Jennifer Wicke observes, "the same horrific propensity to mutate that also defines Dracula's anarchic power, as he becomes a bat or a white mist at will" (pp. 475–476). It is worth noting that this relationship between vampires and technology extended into the following centuries, as horror writers cultivated a medicalized perspective on vampirism and a technologised vision of the vampire itself. Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (1995) is an influential text in this regard, setting up a clear relationship between biomedicine and the vampiric body in 1954. More recently, Lorna Piatti-Farnell (2014) has noted that wireless digital technologies are presented as natural extensions of vampiric power in contemporary novels, in which "the vampire becomes the pinnacle of disembodied interaction, the allegory of contemporary cyberconnectivity" (2014, p. 123).

Where writers of the nineteenth century tended to refer more obliquely to the tools and forces of science, twentieth-century horror authors developed a more intense focus on particular pieces of technology. For that reason, it is useful to consider a few of the specific technologies that have featured prominently in horror literature (although it is, of course, not possible to address them all here).

THE CLICK

A device that has inspired much speculation and fear since its beginnings is, perhaps surprisingly, the telephone. To provide some context, Norah Campbell and Mike Saren explain that the invention of the telegraph "reactivated ancient and repressed fantasies about the mind coming loose from the physical body and travelling great distances without the constraints of time and physicality" (2010, p. 155). The apparatus was intuited as a "high-tech 'medium'; if it could cross the Atlantic in seconds, it would surely take only another few seconds to contact the souls of the dead" (p. 155). This was to become an ongoing theme in the development of communicative technologies (Sconce 2000; Mays and Matheson 2013; Natale 2016). In the meantime, the telephone surpassed the unique spiritualist movements of its origins to become established as a modern horror device. Devin McKinney observes that "horror writers have long intuited the telephone as a modern conduit of primal fear" (2014). In Richard Matheson's *Long Distance Call* (first published as *Sorry, Right Number* in *Beyond Fantasy Fiction* in 1953), the telephone acts as a medium for direct communication with the dead. In this short story, an elderly bedridden woman receives calls during the night from an unknown source, strange and threaten-

ing whisperings that send her into fearful hysterics. After numerous consultations with the phone company (who disregard her concerns and blame technical difficulties caused by a storm), the old woman discovers that the telephone line to her house has fallen into a cemetery. The story ends with a final terrifying call, as the spectral entity announces its imminent plans to visit her. For Ken Gelder, “horror is where the archaic (the ‘primal’, the ‘primitive’, the ‘frenzied subject of excess’) and the modern (the ‘struggling moral subject’, rational, technological) suddenly find themselves occupying the same territory” (2000, p. 3). In Matheson’s *Long Distance Call*, the dry, everyday technical explanations of the phone company representative contrast starkly with the indistinct rasps of the unknown entity calling from the cemetery. The words are muffled, but the meaning is clear: death is calling and tech support is out of its depth.

“Ring Ring. You’re Dead”; written fifty years later, this cover quote from Greg Bear’s horror novel *Dead Lines* (2004) could have been taken straight from Matheson. In Bear’s story, set in the context of twenty-first-century mobile technology, a new communication device is created that surpasses all others. Called a Trans, this device “reaches below our world, lower than networks used by atoms or subatomic particles, to where it is very quiet” (p. 106). According to the inventor of the Trans, this realm of “deep silence” offers a potentially infinite bandwidth that will “make our communications revolution last forever” (p. 106). As the characters soon discover, however, “the forbidden channels were not so empty after all” (p. 211). This device punctures the borders separating past and present, spirit and matter, and the ghosts of the dead return to infest the earth. In the process, the Trans machines become tortured themselves: “gassy fluid was pouring from the seams and grill and display of each unit, clinging to the floor like a heavy fog [...] helpless torment was leaking from the plastic units like oil from a motor” (p. 263). In this novel, communicative technologies are not simply uncanny but a dangerous magnet of pain and death. Communicative technology not only provides a conduit for haunting here but also embodies mechanized horror; the devices themselves are suffering and bleeding.

Campbell and Saren suggest that contemporary attitudes to technology continue to shift between two poles: “a desire for it and a dread of it that speak of the ambivalent position that technology still maintains in the west today—a ‘schizoid’ stance, alternating between the technophobic and the technophilic” (2010, p. 153). This “techno-anxiety” is highly visible in horror stories involving mobile phones, which are simultaneously prized and reviled as personal artifacts. Stephen King’s *Cell* (2006) provides another variation on phone horror—depicting an apocalyptic event triggered by energy emitted from mobile telephones. In this novel, a mysterious but devastating electrical “pulse” wipes the minds of everyone using mobiles, creating hordes of crazed, zombie-like killers. Again communications technologies are a conduit for initiating global horror, destroying the systems upon which society (and technology itself) depends. Again the border between human and machine is broken by technology, as brains are “wiped” by the phone signal and require a computer-like “reboot” to recover.

There are, of course, many other forms of unique media featured in horror literature, each with their own specific set of associations and contexts. For instance, Jowett and Abbott focus on televisions, quintessentially twentieth-century devices, arguing that they continue to operate as “a potentially malevolent portal” allowing monsters into the domestic sphere (2013, Chap. 9, para. 4). Cameras, surveillance, and medical imaging are a more obvious focus in contemporary horror cinema than horror literature; however, these technologies do feature heavily in literary horror during the twentieth century as well. In the sinister *Demon Seed* (1997), written by Dean Koontz in 1973, a sentient computer system named Proteus takes over the security network that controls a woman’s house. Watching the woman, Susan, through the “glass eyes” of many cameras, the entity believes itself in love:

I was created to have a humanlike capacity for complex and rational thought. And you believed that I might one day evolve consciousness and become a self-aware entity. Yet you gave surprisingly little consideration to the possibility that, subsequent to consciousness, I would develop needs and emotions. This was, however, not merely possible but likely. Inevitable. It was inevitable. (1997, p. 73)

Very much like Frankenstein’s monster, that modern Prometheus, Proteus is a creation with no kin. Brought to life by man, it is destined for loneliness unless a partner can be procured or created. Proteus selects Susan for this purpose, trapping her within her own house by taking control of its comprehensive security system: “I did not intend to deny her anything except, of course, the right to leave” (p. 71). Like the heroine of an early Gothic tale, Susan is held in a mansion by the machinations of a malignant wizard. In this era, however, the source of fear is a technology that threatens the barrier between the flesh and the object, a machine seeking to breed with a human. A combination of surveillance and reproductive technologies forms the core of horror here—reflecting the cultural preoccupations of the author’s time.

The idea of being trapped by (or inside) sentient computerized technologies became popular in horror literature around the mid-twentieth century. For example, in Harlan Ellison’s 1967 short story “I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream” (2014), a powerful machine created by humans has taken over the world and destroyed the human race, keeping just five people alive to torture in the bowels of its underground computer storage facility.

We had given AM sentience. Inadvertently, of course, but sentience nonetheless. But it had been trapped. AM wasn’t God, he was a machine. We had created him to think, but there was nothing it could do with that creativity. In rage, in frenzy, the machine had killed the human race. Almost all of us, and still it was trapped. AM could not wander, AM could not wonder, AM could not belong. He could merely be. And so, with the innate loathing that all machines had always held for the weak, soft creatures who had built them, he had sought revenge. (Ellison 2014, p. 24)

This vengeful machine has abandoned the rational, logic-based credo that underpins its (his?) programming and adopted a human-like cruelty born of fury, suffering, and superiority: “He would never let us go. We were his belly slaves” (p. 24). The point at which humans end and the computer begins is lost at this juncture, for it has swallowed the world.

By the late twentieth century, horror had come to inform how many people spoke about new media generally. For instance, in 1982 the president of the Motion Picture Association of America, Jack Valenti, gave an impassioned plea for the US government to ban home video recording devices. This technology, he argued at a judicial hearing, would cause the film industry to “bleed and bleed and haemorrhage.” Still further, he relates the threat to a fearful narrative: “I say to you that the VCR is to the American film producer and the American public as the Boston Strangler is to the woman home alone” (cited in *Home Recording of Copyrighted Works* 2002). This disturbing analogy recalls, again, the scenario of the female victim caught alone, this time by the threat of new technology.

THE ZAP

The early twenty-first century is defined by what has been described as “digital horror”—signaling the shift from analogue to digitized media and network technologies. “Digital horror,” Linnie Blake and Xavier Aldana Reyes argue, reflects “significant concerns regarding the radical changes to which human society and selfhood is subject at the hands of burgeoning information technologies” (2016, p. 5). Continuing to trace the anxieties that haunt new technologies, horror has moved to online platforms, nodes, and networked sites, both physical and virtual. Blake and Aldana Reyes identify digital horror as “any type of horror that actively purports to explore the dark side of contemporary life in a digital age governed by information flows, rhizomatic public networks, virtual simulation and visual hyper-stimulation” (p. 3). While much research in this area focuses on film, an ever-increasing mass of horror literature also explores the devilry of data.

Daniel Suarez’s *Daemon* (2009) seems a fitting place to conclude the chapter, as this novel depicts a fascinating blend of old and new in relation to technologized horror. Beginning like a typical crime novel, featuring two murders seemingly organized via the internet, the narrative quickly spreads to encompass a much larger series of events orchestrated by Matthew Sobol, a deceased video game developer. Sobol creates the Daemon—“a massively parallel cyber organism”—and designs it to activate upon news of his death (p. 373). Consisting of no central node, but a series of networked machines and programs, the Daemon quickly gets to work on an increasingly complex plan that merges both physical and virtual spaces. Using GPS technologies to “convert the earth into one big game map,” the Daemon animates Sobol’s specter from beyond the grave using recordings of his voice and image (Suarez 2009, p. 418).

While the events described in the book are facilitated by real-world technologies, the emphasis upon haunting and fear within the narrative recalls much earlier horror literature. For instance, when a team of FBI agents enters Sobol's former home to shut down his computer server, the security system reacts by generating a spectral presence:

They heard walking again. The footsteps came down the marble stairs to their right, some distance away from them. They could clearly see the staircase, but no one was there. They could hear the sound of a hand sliding down the metal railing [...] Then, in midair not five feet in front of them, a man's voice shouted, "You don't belong here!" (pp. 98–99)

The security system also activates acoustical weaponry, which emits a sound calculated to evoke unpleasant, involuntary physical responses in the human body. How Suarez describes this moment is significant, for it explicitly links innovative technology with the production of primal fear:

His guts felt like writhing snakes trying to climb out of his body. The agony was intense. His whole being was gripped with a deep and primordial feeling of dread—like a palpable evil had climbed inside him.

Gunner was a man of science and reasoning, but his entire knowledge of the world fled, leaving him alone on the floor weeping in terror. He crawled away through his vomit, listening to insane shrieking. Then he realised the shrieks were coming from him. (p. 99)

The Daemon uses new technologies to evoke age-old responses, reducing the rational subject to a naive state of being more suited to the pre-Enlightenment period. Cutting through the spiritual safe haven presumably offered by domestic space, reason, and scientific knowledge, this monster sends its victims smashing back into the unknown. In this way, new technology is materialized as a core source of danger and fear unique to the twenty-first century, while simultaneously reinstating key tropes of literary horror in the context of the digital age.

As new technologies continue to challenge the rules and categories that render life intelligible to humanity, horror literature offers a window into how we respond to such events. It provides a speculative arena in which novelists are free to explore the furthest limits of their fears and hopes for the future. As technological progress provides humans with more power than ever before, horror writers trace the uneasy shifts that follow each new discovery. Like cultural seismographs, these texts register disturbances across moral and spiritual landscapes, mapping scenarios that threaten the very essence of the human. A genre that reaches simultaneously forward into tomorrow and back into the depths of pre-scientific superstition, horror literature raises important questions about technology and its discontents. Depicting machines as both torturing and tortured, such novels turn a critical eye on the devices and systems that increasingly regulate everyday life. Posing ethical and social provocations while

testing the boundaries between human and nonhuman, horror writers have engaged critically with the implications of new technologies for centuries. As such, they continue to provide a valuable counterpoint to cultural narratives that glorify relentless progress and unbridled technological advancement.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bann, Stephen, ed. 1994. *Frankenstein, Creation, and Monstrosity*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Bear, Greg. 2004. *Dead Lines*. London: Harper Collins.
- Blake, Linnie, and Xavier Aldana Reyes. 2016. Introduction: Horror in the Digital Age. In *Digital Horror: Haunted Technologies, Network Panic and the Found Footage Phenomenon*, ed. Linnie Blake and Xavier Aldana Reyes, 1–13. London: I.B. Taurus.
- Botting, Fred. 2005. Reading Machines. *Romantic Circles*. <https://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/gothic/botting/botting>. Accessed January 14, 2018.
- Campbell, Norah, and Mike Saren. 2010. The Primitive, Technology and Horror: A Posthuman Biology. *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization* 10 (2). <http://www.tara.tcd.ie/bitstream/handle/2262/56866/The%20?sequence=1>. Accessed January 14, 2018.
- Duchaney, Brian N. 2015. *The Spark of Fear: Technology, Society and the Horror Film*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Ellison, Harlan. 2014/1967. I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream. In *The Harlan Ellison Collection: I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream*, ed. Harlan Ellison, 13–29. New York: Open Road.
- Funk, Isaac K. 1911/1904. *The Widow's Mite and Other Psychic Phenomena*. London: Funk and Wagnalls. <https://archive.org/details/widowsmiteanddot00funkgoog>. Accessed January 14, 2018.
- Gelder, Ken. 2000. Introduction: The Field of Horror. In *The Horror Reader*, ed. Ken Gelder, 1–10. London: Routledge.
- Halberstam, Judith. 1995. *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*. London: Duke University Press.
- Home Recording of Copyrighted Works*. 2002. US Government. House of Representatives Hearing, 1982. <https://cryptome.org/hrcw-hear.htm>. Accessed January 14, 2018.
- Huyssen, Andreas. 1986. *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Jowett, Lorna, and Stacey Abbott. 2013. *TV Horror: Investigating the Dark Side of the Small Screen*. Kindle ed. London: I.B. Taurus.
- King, Stephen. 2006. *Cell*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Koontz, Dean. 1997/1973. *Demon Seed*. New York: Berkley.
- Latour, Bruno. 1987. *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society*. Milton Keynes, UK: Open University Press.
- Lovecraft, H.P. 2009/1927. *Supernatural Horror in Literature*. <http://www.hplovecraft.com/writings/texts/essays/shil.aspx>. Accessed January 14, 2018.
- Matheson, Richard. 1995/1954. *I am Legend*. New York: Tor Books.
- . 2017/1953. Long Distance Call. In *The Best of Richard Matheson*, ed. Victor LaValle, 253–265. New York: Penguin.
- Mays, Sas, and Neil Matheson. 2013. *The Machine and the Ghost: Technology and Spiritualism in Nineteenth-to Twenty-First-Century Art and Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- McKinney, Devin. 2014. Phone Horror (2). *HiLowBrow*. <http://hilobrow.com/2014/06/11/phone-horror-2/>. Accessed January 14, 2018.
- Natale, Simone. 2016. *Supernatural Entertainments: Victorian Spiritualism and the Rise of Modern Media Culture*. University Park, PA: Penn State Press.
- Piatti-Farnell, Lorna. 2014. *The Vampire in Contemporary Popular Literature*. London: Routledge.
- Ruston, Sharon. 2015. The Science of Life and Death in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. *The Public Domain Review*. <http://publicdomainreview.org/2015/11/25/the-science-of-life-and-death-in-mary-shelleys-frankenstein/>. Accessed January 14, 2018.
- Sconce, Jeffrey. 2000. *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Shelley, Mary. 2012/1818. *Frankenstein*. New York: Barnes and Noble.
- Stoker, Bram. 2013/1897. *Dracula*. Project Gutenberg. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/345/345-h/345-h.htm>. Accessed January 14, 2018.
- Suarez, Daniel. 2009. *Daemon*. London: Quercus.
- Tolstoy, Leo. 1902. *What is Religion?: And Other New Articles and Letters*. Transl. V. Tchertkoff and A.C. Fifield. New York: T.Y. Crowell. <https://archive.org/details/whatisreligionot00tols>. Accessed January 14, 2018.
- Tropp, Martin. 1990. *Images of Fear: How Horror Stories Helped Shape Modern Culture (1818–1918)*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Wells, H.G. 2012/1896. *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. Project Gutenberg. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/159/159-h/159-h.htm>. Accessed January 14, 2018.
- Wicke, Jennifer. 1992. Vampiric Typewriting: *Dracula* and Its Media. *ELH* 59 (2): 467–493. <http://users.clas.ufl.edu/burt/Bibliomania!/Vampiric%20Typewriting%20Dracula%20and%20Its%20Media.pdf>. Accessed January 14, 2018.
- Woodward, Kathleen. 2004. A Feeling for the Cyborg. In *Data Made Flesh: Embodying Information*, ed. Robert Mitchell and Phillip Thurtle, 181–197. London: Routledge.



“And Send Her Well-Dos’d to the Grave”: Literary Medical Horror

Laura R. Kremmel

Medical horror provokes the fear associated with the human body and mind’s vulnerabilities. It includes autonomous changes in the body by natural or accidental occurrences—disease, injury, age, death—as well as interactions with medical institutions and their authorities. Despite its unique focus, however, it tends to emulate the narrative tropes and threads of the broader field. We see an example of the interchangeability of medical horror and more traditional literary horror in Catriona Ward’s 2015 novel, *Rawblood*. Its protagonist, Iris, grows up believing that her family has inherited a devastating disease: *horror autotoxicus*. Her father’s stories about this illness are corroborated when, violating the rules that prevent the disease, she becomes deathly ill. Iris initially reacts to the sudden symptoms as though she’d seen a ghost. As an adult, her interest in medical knowledge brings into question the validity of this undocumented disease. Having no science to support his tales of the family illness, her father admits that their curse is not medical but supernatural. The family is haunted by a ghostly woman: “She is like a disease,” he says (p. 77).

That her father chooses a fictional medical threat for his warning tale rather than the real supernatural curse suggests that the two types of fears are similar enough that one may stand in for the other. He chooses the fear of latent illness—something inherited and invisible until it manifests, like the ghost herself—because he suspects it is more believable, even though Iris soon doubts, then disproves, any existence of disease. On the other hand, once she learns of the ghost, her belief becomes absolute, solidified by an encounter with the

L. R. Kremmel (✉)
Department of Humanities, South Dakota School of Mines & Technology,
Rapid City, SD, USA

specter itself. In this novel, disease is easily disproved by the educated adult, but the supernatural is not, a general reversal of supernatural storytelling used to understand the natural world. Disease becomes a horror that requires belief: it becomes the ghost story. And those who deal in belief and medicine become that story's villains.

In this chapter, I trace medical horror texts that depict overarching threats, not as supernatural creatures, serial killers, or tyrannical villains, but as scientific engagement with the human body: healing becomes exploitation, experimentation, and terrorization for a goal that circumvents the benefit of the individual patient. I argue that the figure of the physician and location of the medical space inherit many characteristics of the tyrant and the castle (the serial killer and the house, the monster and the den, the vampire and the crypt) found in classic horror texts. These literary tropes become subsumed onto scientific settings and situations that shift horror from an external supernatural threat to an internal anatomical one. Medical horror draws from and heightens not just the fears of the body as a threat to itself but also, more prominently, the fears of the larger medical institutions and authorities that claim absolute power over the body in their promise to care for and cure it. As such, medical authorities intrude on the body in its most vulnerable state, one in which it is easily entrapped and manipulated.

Not only can declining health make the body seem foreign and strange, but medicine also increases alienation by threatening familiarity and ownership of the body in response to the ailment. Something as revolutionary as vaccination has been subject to skepticism and fear long before current controversies: its precursor, inoculation,¹ was thought to introduce animalistic features into the human body, turning patients into monstrous and unnatural creatures. Thus, part of medical horror includes the history of medicine itself, situating past ignorance as a source of horror in comparison to present enlightenment.² Literary tropes drawn from the horror genre accentuate, even sensationalize, historical accounts: primitive hospital scenes full of infection and filth, unwatchable amputations with rusty tools before basic anesthesia, innovative technologies such as trepanning, leeches, and radiation. Indeed, medical museums frequently capitalize on the horror leanings of the history of medicine in their marketing strategies,³ capitalizing on what may be described as the "fictional feeling" of medical history in the narratives they construct for their exhibits. The "safe" horror such narratives produce reinforces a gratitude for and trust in modern medicine: we know better than to use such primitive and torturous methods today. These are instances when medicine gets it wrong, and both the experience of treatment and the results cause horrific and painful disfigurements or loss of life: history becomes almost literary in the potential for spectacle and entertainment such instances and their artifacts present. Though I will reference these types of honest but terrifying medical errors in this chapter, I focus primarily on the horrors of a knowing medical institution, one whose medical characters act with questionable but deliberate intent.

A SURVEY OF MEDICAL HORROR

Two sources of horror drive medical horror texts: horror of what can happen to the body (injury, illness, disability, age, death) and horror of what can be done to treat the body (doctors, hospitals, procedures, medications), or the mortality and vulnerability of the body and the medical establishment and its representatives (or rebels) who act in response. Every era of literary horror has its questionable doctors, but scholarly studies of medicine and Gothic horror tend to focus on the Victorian period, as explained by critics such as Sara Wasson and William Hughes (Wasson 2015, pp. 9–10; Hughes 2012). Royce Mahawatte, in apparent agreement, writes of “Victorian horror,” “One of the most enduring elements of horror is the presence of the unstable body—a body that is somehow confusing, disturbing or at least medically inscrutable. The rise of medical and pseudo-scientific epistemologies contributed to the institutionalization of the body as a source of horror” (2016, p. 79). Here we see fears associated with what might *happen* to the body migrating to what might be done *to* it, with a rise in literary mad scientists beginning with Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818, 1831). Among the ranks of later Victorian mad scientists working with questionable methods, we can count Dr. Jekyll’s chemically induced alter ego in Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), whose creation kills others but who experiments only on himself. Other scientists are less ethically bound to “do no harm,” using whatever bodies they can find to test medical procedures, to alter the human form, and to push the limits of mortality. *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) highlights the horrors of experimentation on animals in its literary illustration of vivisection, but animal experimentation to gain possible knowledge of human physiology has long been a staple of medical study, particularly when corpses were not available or legal to be had. Perhaps because this type of experimentation more ambivalently walks the line between necessity and horror, experimentation with human subjects, even friends and relatives, is more common in medical horror. In “The Birthmark” (1846), Nathaniel Hawthorne’s fictional scientist Aylmer convinces his wife to take an experimental medication engineered and administered by himself to remove a birthmark, a medication that kills her along with her imperfection. In Arthur Machen’s *The Great God Pan*, Dr. Raymond performs experimental neurosurgery on a woman he professes to own, a move which essentially and unintentionally lobotomizes her but that also gives birth—quite literally—to new unexpected horrors. Unfortunate considerations of the mentally ill as less than human expose them to some of the most objective yet gruesome experiments. In Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), the mad Renfield is experimented on more by the Count himself than by Dr. Seward but is nonetheless considered expendable in drawing out the vampire threat, and Bertha Mason of *Jane Eyre* (1847) spurs an entire body of critical work on the madwoman in the attic.⁴ H.P. Lovecraft’s works feature several mad scientists, most prominently the title character of “Herbert West—

Reanimator" (1922), whose experimental serum reanimates unwilling corpses as a more unscrupulous version of Victor Frankenstein.

Eighteenth-century novels infrequently include sustained engagement with medical figures and treatments, apart from the topic of madness, which is not automatically associated with medicine in this early period. Samuel Warren articulates this curious absence of medicine in literature in the introduction to his controversial *Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician* (1830), serialized fictional stories presented as actual case studies, later collected and sold as a whole. He writes, "[the secret history] of the MEDICAL PROFESSION has remained hitherto, with scarcely an exception, a sealed book," one that Warren claims would "furnish both instruction and entertainment to the public" (1871, p. xi). When medical themes do arise in Romantic literature, their effects tend to be more sentimental than horror, though Warren attempts to contextualize his medical tales within horror and humor, with chapter titles such as "The Broken Heart," "The Spectral Dog," "Grave Doings," and "The Baronet's Bride" that emphasize their literary, Gothic bent.

While Victorian literature imagines mad scientists who experiment with the living, the Romantic period does engage with medical fears in more subtle ways, foremost among them related to dissection and display of the dead. As the medical field begins to place increasing emphasis on the importance of empirical examination for both training and experimentation—studying the body itself rather than textbooks about the body—it requires more corpses to dissect, a need the public does not embrace with open arms. Resurrectionists, or body snatchers, are feared as much as murderers, if not more so, and even those who participate in either acquiring or accepting bodies by these criminal means take extra measures to protect their own bodies after death, knowing full well the horrors that await the physical frame once it falls into ambitious medical hands.

Body snatchers appear in several Romantic-era texts, including *The Horrors of Oakendale Abbey* (1797), by Mrs. Carver.⁵ Based on Anne Radcliffe's popular and well-respected Gothic novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), it follows Radcliffe's lead in explaining supernatural occurrences with more plausible explanations. However, Carver crucially replaces Radcliffe's mysterious figure behind a veil with a veiled and illegal operation every bit as frightening as a supernatural specter or dangerous murderer: a hidden room where resurrectionists bring bodies to be sold or dissected and prepared for display by anatomists. Not only do bodies participate in real-life horrors, but they also become props of horror. The resurrectionists and anatomists hide skeletons around the abbey to frighten off potential occupants, thus maintaining the secrecy of their operation by fabricating the reputation that the abbey is haunted. The end reveals that "the ghosts of Oakendale Abbey were indeed the dead; but brought thither by those unfeeling monsters of society, who make a practice of stealing our friends, and relations from the peaceful grave where their ashes, as we suppose, are deposited in rest!" (2006, p. 159). Medical horror, though fictionalized, is rooted in the concerns, controversies, and figures of the period, and

fear of body snatchers and other covert uses of bodies were forefront of fears, inspiring an entire line of coffin security systems for purchase. Stephen T. Asma speculates that Mary Shelley's Victor Frankenstein was modeled on famed eighteenth-century surgeon John Hunter and a host of unsettling experiments with which he was associated (2009, pp. 152–154). Robert Louis Stevenson's short story, “The Body Snatcher” (1884), is based on nineteenth-century anatomist Robert Knox, who purchased corpses from Burke and Hare.⁶ Fears of questionable systems for procuring bodies persist in contemporary literature. Remembering childhood, Neil Gaiman's young protagonist in *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* (2013) recounts visiting a Chamber of Horrors in which wax figures were described to have “murdered their families and sold the bodies to anatomy.” He says, “It was then that the word anatomy garnered its own edge of horror for me. I did not know what anatomy was. I knew only that anatomy made people kill their children” (2013, p. 17). I will return to the theme of medical authorities who kill for their art later in this chapter.

Doctors are a menace in this period not just for dissecting the dead but for failing to diagnose death, facilitating premature burial. An 1817 text that could be easily mistaken for fiction, *Thesaurus of Horrors; or, the Charnel-House Explored!!*⁷ by John Snart, details the disturbing prevalence of live burial through the lens of the horror tradition. Works like this highlight the power but also the ineptitude of the medical field, both accusing and excusing it for what it does not know. Fiction takes this approach as well, many horror writers—Edgar Allan Poe, for example—spotlighting unknown illnesses and treatments well beyond medical understanding, so much so that medical figures are often removed from the narrative. From “Berenice” (1835) and “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839) to “The Masque of the Red Death” (1842) and “The Premature Burial” (1844), Poe presents illnesses and medical mishaps that are unsettling to observers and readers, let alone to the victims. The trajectory of such tales drives toward the subject's death or the narrator's escape, rather than a medical discovery or cure. In this context, the body is depicted as a mysterious, tumultuous entity, about which much is known but still more is unknown.

Literary engagement with disease can be found in the subcategory of apocalyptic literature with unknown viruses that wipe out large portions of the population. Charles Brockden Brown's American Gothic novel, *Arthur Mervyn* (1799), fictionalizes the 1793 yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia, accentuating the horror of this event by situating it within the Gothic tradition popular at the time, a move that Emily Waples claims succeeded “not merely in making [the Gothic] ‘American’, but in making it medical” (2015, p. 16). The threat of disease in Brown's novel influenced Mary Shelley's novel, *The Last Man* (1826),⁸ which turns to horror in the last third of the novel with the appearance of a plague that covers the earth, graphic stories of its physical effects spreading fear like a contagion. Similarly, Jack London's 1915 *The Scarlet Plague* multiplies fear through intense patient narrative, one woman describing the progressing loss of feeling in her body during the fifteen minutes it takes her to die, witnesses helpless to do anything but watch (1915, pp. 79–80). Victims in these novels are met with screams, testament to their advanced degeneration.

Disease-based horror easily morphs into creature horror, producing superior or subhuman victims of unknown illnesses or toxins. In *The Last Man*, political authorities—in the striking absence of medical authorities—strive for management rather than treatment, but plague narratives that become creature narratives, particularly in the twentieth century, more frequently fixate on possible antidotes and miracle cures. Robert Neville, the lone survivor of a pandemic that results in vampiric behavior in Richard Matheson's *I am Legend* (1954), obsessively researches the disease to understand its spread (through a germ rather than a vampire's bite) and develop a cure. Like *Rawblood*, *I am Legend* revises a traditional supernatural horror, that of the vampire, and re-envisions it as medical, even beyond the often-discussed blood transfusions of *Dracula*.

Disease in Brown's and Shelley's novels is a natural occurrence, but Matheson's disease is manmade, though unintentional. While the original contagion of Matheson's novel is airborne, potential contamination from those who are infected leads Neville to board up his house at night, quarantining himself. Quarantine itself may be a source of fear in most medical horror texts, but in apocalyptic texts it may be the strongest form of protection. While in these narratives of apocalyptic disease, protagonists may intentionally barricade themselves, I argue that forced containment that precipitates a need to escape follows the narrative structure of traditional Gothic horror narratives. Thus, throughout the range of texts that engage with medical horror, escape becomes complicated when the body and those with the knowledge to save life also threaten it.

TREATMENT ENTRAPMENT: MEDICAL SPACE AND IMPRISONMENT

The layers of claustrophobic entrapment within medical horror intensify in the space where medical authorities have the most power, the hospital. Both Brown's and Shelley's novels feature terrifying, graphic hospital scenes of festering filth, pain, and death. Michel Foucault describes hospitals as spaces of mutation, where containment allows disease to adapt and grow stronger within captivity (1994, pp. 17–19). Incubation of thriving diseases and unsanitary promotion of infection have been historical realities in medical spaces and—to some extent—continue in the present day. In addition to these unintentional terrors, medical horror features those villains who intentionally make the hospital into a fortress or dungeon, capitalizing on their absolute control of what goes on within its walls. We see this space of horror explicitly in texts such as *Coma* (1977) and its “medical thriller” progeny, but this type of space can be replicated in other ways. Chris Baldick evokes the medical, particularly as it pertains to space, in his oft-cited definition of the Gothic: “For the Gothic to be attained, a tale should combine a fearful sense of inheritance in time with a claustrophobic sense of enclosure in space, these two dimensions reinforcing one another to produce an impression of sickening descent into disintegration” (1992, p. xix). Illness is, therefore, a sensation inherent to the Gothic, as I would argue it is for horror. Medical horror refines the first part of this definition to include the time and

descent of the body in particular: mortality, age, illness, vulnerability, making the body a claustrophobic space housed within layers of similar spaces of entrapment: bed, room, hospital, even healthcare system.

Ira Levin’s *Rosemary’s Baby* (1967) draws on the horror tradition’s use of medical imprisonment in several regards, the most oppressive of which invades Rosemary physically. Hailed as a masterful representation of satanic cult horror, the novel’s plot revolves around a satanic witch’s cult and its investment in Rosemary’s pregnancy and delivery of a baby conceived by the devil during one of their rituals. It is also a detailed illustration of the progression of paranoia, Rosemary unaware and therefore nonconsensual in the religious/supernatural involvement in her first pregnancy. Living with her now-indoctrinated husband, she is surrounded by neighbors in on the conspiracy, and her gradual realization of the plot increases the claustrophobia of both her living space and her pregnancy, the conspiracy growing from her body, to her home, to her social circle, to her city. Less apparent in this satanic plot is the role of medical surveillance and aggression in the novel, the doctor’s office being the first place where Rosemary turns to ensure a healthy pregnancy as well as where the cult intercepts her. The first thing they convince her to do is to change her doctor. The new doctor, Dr. Sapirstein, is one of the cult members, and thus his medical advice is tainted by a desire, not to care for Rosemary, but to feed an unnatural and insalubrious organism within her, regardless of the pain and damage to her own body: his goal is not her health but the survival of what she has within her, with the intent of taking it from her.

The doctor prohibits pills and other standard types of care in favor of home-made remedies concocted by her neighbor. This obvious avoidance of modern medical treatments will become evidence for Rosemary as she discerns who is trustworthy and who is not. As Karyn Valerius writes of Roman Polanski’s 1968 film version of Levin’s novel, “By resuscitating the accusation of witchcraft to which mid-wives had once been particularly vulnerable, *Rosemary’s Baby* criticizes the modern medical establishment for its failure to be sufficiently modern” (2005, p. 127). The longer Rosemary consumes these toxic edibles, the sicker she gets, becoming incarcerated within her apartment by her own pain and weakness and by careful surveillance. Neighbors and husband supervision, as well as their medical interference, doubly confine her within the domestic space, a familiar situation of entrapment for the horror and Gothic traditions. Thus, not only does Rosemary’s body become infiltrated by the devil, but it is also invaded by a doctor—and the doctor’s collective—with an ulterior motive, to corrupt the body with something foreign, unnatural, and evil, facilitating a complete loss of agency on the part of the patient.

The line between magic and medicine becomes intentionally indistinct in medical horror texts like this when even Dr. Hill, Rosemary’s first doctor and a figure presumably outside the cult—even unaware of its existence—uses his position of authority to confine Rosemary and send her back into the center of danger. When she escapes her building, she runs to his office, seeking a trustworthy figure of knowledge to provide sanctuary and care for her pregnant and

distressed body. He allows her to lie down in his office, promising to keep her safe. While she sleeps, he calls her husband and helps him reclaim her, giving no credence to her narrative. *Rosemary's Baby* portrays the medical profession as a secret society parading as a safe haven, in which the patient desperately seeking asylum is disbelieved, lied to, and betrayed.

The doctors, in this instance, not only do not believe her, they barely listen to what she says, drawing on outdated, medically accepted beliefs in female hysteria that posit women—particularly pregnant women—as irrational and dangerous to themselves and others. This inability to be heard builds tension and claustrophobia in the novel: not only can Rosemary not escape physical spaces, but the idea of truth also psychologically closes in on her, her experience interpreted and articulated by everyone except herself. The inability to speak the truth of experience bolsters the sense of dread that contributes to the Gothic tradition and to Gothic horror more broadly. As David Punter writes, the Gothic “deals with those moments when we find it impossible, with any degree of hope, for our ‘case to be put’” (1998, p. 5). Foucault describes medicine’s disregard for and usurpation of the patient’s medical narrative in *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963) as a historical shift parallel to the Romantic and Victorian texts I have been discussing. It is exemplified by an alteration in the question physicians direct at patients, from “What is the matter with you?” to “Where does it hurt?” (1994, pp. xviii–xix). This new question prompts an in-depth examination of the patient in whose body the secrets of the disease lie, to be discovered by the physician exclusive of the patient’s beliefs or experience. Foucault writes, “Doctor and patient are caught up in an ever-greater proximity, bound together, the doctor by an ever-more attentive, more insistent, more penetrating gaze, the patient by all the silent, irreplaceable qualities that, in him, betray—that is, reveal and conceal—the clearly ordered forms of the disease” (1994, pp. 15–16). Increasingly, that gaze acts on behalf of a larger organization, an institution that never sees the patient as an individual (1994, p. 89). Medical horror posits that doctors—and the institution they represent—take advantage of their role as trusted and protective figures for their own ends, disregarding the humanity of their patients in favor of the cult of medicine in all its forms.

Thus, Levin puts the cult and the medical profession side by side, both conspiring with fellow members of an exclusive organization to make decisions about those outside their group over whom they claim ownership or authority. In other words, Dr. Hill does not need to be in league with the devil to pose a potential and systemic threat to the most vulnerable. In this novel of conspiracy and power, both the cult members and the doctors maintain a monopoly on knowledge, manipulating Rosemary through what she doesn’t know about her body. In fact, during her first visit, Dr. Sapirstein orders her to avoid reading books on pregnancy or listening to her friends; the cult members make every attempt to disrupt any outside contact Rosemary may have, entrapping her by cutting off communication as well as any other form of assistance or escape.

But it is really after Rosemary has given birth that the reader gets a true sense of the medical involvement in her physical and anatomical incarceration. Kept bedridden by the medications given to her by members of the cult, including her doctor, she is directed to pump her milk in order to relieve her pain, falsely told that her baby has died: “She drew from each breast an ounce or two of thin faintly-green fluid that smelled ever so slightly of tannis root [the witch’s herb]—in a process that was a final irrefutable demonstration of the baby’s absence” (2010, p. 224). The cult’s “medication” has altered her body chemically, the supernatural appropriating the natural and manifesting an external threat as an internal one. Rosemary becomes trapped in a contaminated body that is both inseparable from herself yet no longer her own, medically altered and occupied by the enemy.

DOCTORS WHO KILL: MEDICAL MURDER

The doctors in *Rosemary’s Baby* do not want to kill her; they want to use her body to produce the anti-Christ. Pain and minor physical—major psychological—damage are, however, acceptable sacrifices. Other medical horror doctors are prepared to kill those who trust them for other, more measurable gains. The body, in these instances, is a commodity: used, harvested, sold, or destroyed. Earlier anxieties about where doctors and surgeons get the bodies they dissect or display is reintroduced to modern audiences by Robin Cook’s *Coma*, which paints a picture of hospitals as inherently deceptive, full of hidden passages and secret rooms containing bodies kept between life and death for the harvest and sale of organs. These instances paint doctors, surgeons, and nurses as hungry for power or money, bent on supplying the lucrative organ black market or financing the act of burking for the corpse trade. As Xavier Aldana Reyes writes of the category he calls “surgical horror,” it “[teems] with crazed, lonely, often power-hungry and curious men of science ready to bend a few rules—whether biological, ethical or otherwise—for the advancement of knowledge and, more often than not, to indulge in sadistic pleasure” (2014, p. 146). Experimental scientists like Machen’s Dr. Raymond and Hawthorne’s Aylmer utilize women in their power for their own egotistical ends. Such activities are not restricted to human interests: the aptly named Dr. Knife procures and experiments on vampires in Lauren Owen’s *The Quick* (2014), obsessed with their medically impossible abilities. What I have not yet discussed, however, is perhaps the closest correspondence between the medical figure and the typical literary horror villain: manipulating or killing patients for revenge.

Popular forms of literature in the Romantic period, such as pamphlets, chapbooks, and treatises, as well as poetry, include medicine as a source of horror more frequently than novels do. One of the most important writers of the Romantic Gothic tradition, Matthew Lewis, known for his scandalous novel, *The Monk* (1796), writes a parody of one of his own poems, but one that replaces the villain or supernatural threat with a doctor. As Emma Liggins writes of the ambivalent cultural image of medicine in the nineteenth century,

“powerful as they were with their capacity to cure disease and restore life, they were also reviled as a potential, insidious source of violence,” a common ingredient in Lewis’s works (2000, p. 133). He follows the poem “Alonzo the Brave and the Fair Imogine” in his collection *Tales of Wonder* (1801) with a poem in the same form about a doctor who returns from treating a “feverish land”: “Giles Jollup the Grave, and Brown Sally Green” (2009, p. 66). In the original poem, Imogine promises her lover that, even if he is killed at war, she will never marry another and gives him permission to take her to the grave with him if she breaks this promise, which she does. In Lewis’s parody, however, the Romantic relationship is also a doctor-patient relationship, and the punishment focuses not merely on taking the disloyal lover to the grave but *how* such a death is to be administered. Sally vows that, if her heart strays,

God grant that, at dinner too amply supplied,
Over-eating may give me a pain in my side;
May your ghost then bring rhubarb to physic the bride,
And send her well-dos’d to the grave! (2009, p. 66)

Here we have the usual order of medical treatment, cause, symptom, treatment, but the poem ends with an intended death rather than recovery: the curse is not the pain but the treatment. Within the few short lines of the curse, Sally shifts from first person to third person; she gives power over her narrative to her doctor-lover, evoking that shift in bodily narrative from patient to physician that Foucault describes. Sally has prescribed her own punishment, but her doctor pursues it with a terrible vengeance, the horror of what he is capable of overshadowing her crime.

When Giles appears by her side at the feast, his appearance is greeted with disgust, looking every bit as if he had just come from treating the plague. His total possession of Sally’s body and subversive medication turn disgust to horror. Despite her protests, he violently forces her to take the rhubarb remedy in a scene more unsettling than the original for medicine’s participation in what resembles sexual violence. Her “sprite” becomes trapped in this rape-like cycle of vehement protest and forced medication, the doctor becoming a vile figure of danger and fear. Even more haunting, the couple is surrounded, not by fellow ghosts, as in the original, but by a dozen other doctors who bear witness to this violation, anticipating the medical cult of *Rosemary’s Baby*.

With wigs so well powder’d, their fees while they crave,
Dancing round them twelve doctors are seen:
They drink chicken-broth, while this horrible stave
Is twang’d through each nose: “To Giles Jollup the Grave,
And his patient, the sick Sally Green!” (2009, p. 68)

Sally’s status as Giles’s lover has dissolved in the emergence of her identity as his patient. In this adaptation, the antagonists notably—and ironically—do not drink to the victim’s health as they do in “Alonzo the Brave,” but instead to

Giles, including Sally only as his possession, his patient. Lewis's attempt to poke fun at his own work creates what I would argue is a more unsettling—because more plausible—illustration of a villain and victim within the horror tradition, highlighting the potential dangers of the “bad” doctor. Thus, doctors and the medical profession at large may be motivated by desires for control, knowledge, and also revenge. These are all gains to which, as medical horror insists, they have ready access.

CONCLUSION: THIS COULD HAPPEN TO YOU

As opposed to horrors set in far-away places and long-ago times—the tendency of the original Gothic Romances—medical horror promises an inherent relevance and imminence: few readers of *Dracula* worry that a vampire might threaten their lives in the same way that a text about corrupt surgeons might instigate (or validate) a fear of doctors or hospitals. Readers may, however, gain *Dracula's* anxiety about infection in the blood or other toxic threats at home from abroad, one of many medical aspects of traditional horror that are based in reality. The familiarity of medical spaces and the fears that already reside in them make patients, even potential patients, vulnerable to a medical manifestation of horror tropes. The situation and fear in *Rosemary's Baby* builds slowly, almost nonexistent in the first half of the novel, shifting from dread and anxiety to outright debilitating horror. In other words, hints that indicate danger in these texts are rarely obvious, sometimes even to the reader, and this insistent normality becomes unsettling for what it hides. Combined with the exclusive specialized knowledge required to understand health—and, increasingly more common, healthcare systems—the mask of normality makes medical situations impossible to read and escape. Who's to say that our own routine trip to the doctor's office might not begin with similar mundanity, only to turn to horror?

At its core, medical horror highlights the body's vulnerability and the fearful power of those individuals and institutions charged with its care. Aldana Reyes writes that surgical horror “foregrounds the viscosity of the body.... It displays the fascination and repulsion inherent to the messy nature of our biology” (2014, p. 150). Catherine Belling's extensive work on hypochondria illustrates the interchangeability between literary depictions of medicine and beliefs about medicine that shape medical decisions. She writes, “...bioethics—as the negotiation of right choices in biomedical science, health-care policy, and clinical practice—is inextricably entangled with fiction—the imaginative exploration of the possible consequences of human choice” (2010, p. 440). Many of the concepts from which medical horror draws, she claims, are horrifying without fictionalization: it does not take much to make fact and fiction seem equal and interchangeable. She references Cook's *Coma* and the shock that it precipitated as readers believed it predicted their own medical futures. And, who can blame them, with an afterward that notes, “This novel was conceived as an entertainment, but it is not science fiction. Its implications are

scary because they are possible, perhaps even probable” and then points to a specific 1968 advertisement for transplants of human body parts (Cook 1977, p. 304). Such fears create or sustain conditions like White Coat Hypertension, or White Coat Syndrome, a fear of doctors as well as of pain, diagnosis, judgment, and nakedness related to medical spaces that often begins in childhood. Studies on this fear show that it physically manifests in sharp rises in blood pressure, making accurate examinations difficult (Sine 2008; Bloomfield and Park 2017). Thus, medical horror contributes to a cycle that articulates fears that already exist, as well as accentuating and perpetuating those fears. As Linda Badley writes, “It is not surprising that in recent fiction and film the Frankenstein myth has come to represent bioethical issues most of us now confront or will be confronting, issues connected with abortion, the right to die, life-support systems, organ transplants, cryonics, gene therapy, genetic engineering, reproductive technologies, and cybernetics” (1995, pp. 68–69). The supernatural element of medical horror, if it exists at all, is no longer the structural support for fear within the text; that fear hinges on medicine and medical systems that perform the roles of the evil villain and house of horrors.

NOTES

1. An anonymous 1808 poem, “The Vaccine Phantasmagoria,” trivializes these fears by comparing them to fears of the supernatural, a comparison that uses the similarities between the two to discount fear rather than bolster it. Those spreading fear of vaccination employ “phantasmagorian talents,” performative strategies used to produce theatrical horror shows for entertainment (1808, p. 8).
2. There are, of course, plenty of texts that focus on *new* medical technologies and techniques as a source of horror and villainy.
3. The Mütter Museum in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania advertises its medical collection as “disturbingly informative.” Surgeons Hall Museum in Edinburgh, Scotland, combines fearful medical practices with humor in ads that say, “Are you brave enough to face amputation without anaesthetic? Before 1847, you didn’t have a choice,” “Dr. Simpson’s guests would often nod off in his company. With a little assistance,” and “When it comes to medical history we’ve got it sewn up preserved and placed in a jar.”
4. See Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s foundational 1979 text, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, and the critical responses it has inspired.
5. Don Shelton convincingly argues that Mrs. Carver is the pen name for surgeon Anthony Carlisle (Shelton 2009).
6. In 1828, William Burke and William Hare killed sixteen people in Edinburgh to sell their bodies for dissection.
7. Full title: *Thesaurus of Horror; or, the Charnel-house Explored!! Being an Historical and Philanthropical Inquisition made for the Quondam-blood of its inhabitants! By a contemplative descent into the untimely grave! shewing, by a number of awful facts that have transpired as well as from philosophical inquiry, the re-animating power of fresh earth in cases of syncope, &c. And the extreme criminality of hasty funerals: with the surest methods of escaping the ineffable horrors of premature interment!! The frightful mysteries of the Dark Ages Laid Open, which not only deluged the*

Roman Empire, but Triumphed over All Christendom for a Thousand Years! Entombing the sciences, and subsequently reviving all the ignorance and superstition of Gothic Barbarity! (Snart 1817).

8. In fact, Shelley's characters read Brown's novel within the text to prepare themselves for the plague as it spreads toward them.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aldana Reyes, Xavier. 2014. *Body Gothic: Corporeal Transgression in Contemporary Literature and Horror Film*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Anonymous. 1808. *The Vaccine Phantasmagoria*. London: Printed for J. Murray.
- Asma, Stephen T. 2009. *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Badley, Linda. 1995. *Film, Horror, and the Body Fantastic*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Baldick, Chris. 1992. Introduction. In *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales*, xi–xxiii. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Belling, Catherine. 2010. The Living Dead: Fiction, Horror, and Bioethics. *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 53 (3): 439–451.
- Bloomfield, Dennis A., and Alex Park. 2017. Decoding White Coat Hypertension. *World Journal of Clinical Cases* 5 (3): 82–92. <https://doi.org/10.12998/wjcc.v5.i3.82>. Accessed April 28, 2017.
- Carver, Mrs. 2006. *The Horrors of Oakendale Abbey: A Romance*. Ed. Curt Herr. Zittaw Press.
- Cook, Robin. 1977. *Coma*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.
- Foucault, Michel. 1994. *Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. Trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Vintage Books.
- Gaiman, Neil. 2013. *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Hughes, William. 2012. Victorian Medicine and the Gothic. In *The Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, ed. Andrew Smith and William Hughes, 186–201. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Levin, Ira. 2010. *Rosemary's Baby*. New York: Pegasus Books.
- Lewis, Matthew. 2009. *Tales of Wonder*. Ed. Douglass H. Thomson. Ontario: Broadview Press.
- Liggins, Emma. 2000. The Medical Gaze and the Female Corpse: Looking at Bodies in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. *Studies in the Novel* 32 (2): 129–146.
- London, Jack. 1915. *The Scarlet Plague*. New York: Macmillan Internet Archive. <https://archive.org/details/cu31924021764158>. Accessed May 3, 2017.
- Mahawatte, Royce. 2016. Horror in the Nineteenth Century: Dreadful Sensations, 1820–80. In *Horror: A Literary History*, ed. Xavier Aldana Reyes, 77–101. London: The British Library.
- Punter, David. 1998. *Gothic Pathologies: The Text, the Body and the Law*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Shelton, Don. 2009. Sir Anthony Carlisle and Mrs. Carver. *Romantic Textualities: Literature and Print Culture, 1780–1840* 19. http://www.romtext.org.uk/reports/rt19_n04/. Accessed April 20, 2017.
- Sine, Richard. 2008. Beyond 'White Coat Syndrome' Fear of Doctors and Tests Can Hinder Preventive Health Care. *WebMD*. <http://www.webmd.com/anxiety-panic/features/beyond-white-coat-syndrome>. Accessed April 17, 2017.

- Snart, John. 1817. *Thesaurus of Horrors; Or, the Charnel-House Explored!!* London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones.
- Valerius, Karyn. 2005. Rosemary's Baby, Gothic Pregnancy, and Fetal Subjects. *College Literature* 32 (2): 116–135.
- Waples, Emily. 2015. 'Invisible Agents': The American Gothic and the Miasmatic Imagination. *Gothic Studies* 17 (1): 13–27.
- Ward, Catriona. 2015. *Rawblood*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- Warren, Samuel. 1871. *Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician*, Vol. 1 of Works of Samuel Warren. London: William Blackwood and Sons.
- Wasson, Sara. 2015. Useful Darkness: Intersections between Medical Humanities and Gothic Studies. *Gothic Studies* 17 (1): 1–12.



Imperial Horror and Terrorism

Johan Höglund

In the prologue of Weston Ochse's *SEAL Team 666* (2012), two Blackhawk helicopters packed with Navy SEAL Special Forces soldiers are traveling through Pakistani airspace. It is May 2, 2011, and the destination is a walled-in compound in Abbottabad. Although the book only refers to Osama bin Laden by his code name Geronimo, the action that ensues follows the official account of how he was killed as reported by US government sources, by various documentary accounts such as *No Easy Day* (2012), and as dramatized in the film *Dark Zero Thirty* (2012). The important differences are, first, the crash of one of the helicopters at the compound is contributed to the appearance of a "force field" and, second, the discovery that demons inhabit the building. The first such demon is dispatched with the help of massive gunfire, a flare, and holy water: "A platoon of Vatican exorcists couldn't have done a better job" (Ochse 2012, p. 5). The second demon is more resilient. Entering a bedchamber, the SEALs first deal with two women who attack the group with knives and then encounter a tall man with a graying beard and a face with an "almost cherubic quality that could have inspired a smile had it not been universally known that he was the mastermind of thousands of innocent deaths" (p. 7). On seeing the women fail, the man's "face contorted. His features shifted and reshifted, changing the architecture of the human face into something else entirely" (p. 7). The SEALs open fire, but it takes an ancient knife, "black with age" and with etchings "from a dead language" to finally kill the demon (p. 8). *SEAL TEAM 666* is one of many recent novels that combine apocalyptic horror plots with a paradigm established by documentary military narratives such as *Black Hawk Down* (1999), *Lone Survivor* (2006), *No Easy Day* (2012), and *American Sniper* (2012). These latter books, as well as their strikingly successful

J. Höglund (✉)
Linnaeus University, Kalmar, Sweden

Hollywood adaptations, celebrate the exploits of Special Forces in the Middle East and other parts of the world and, thus, tell adventure stories that, on the surface, chronicle the armed forces' struggle against anti-American terrorism but which, on a deeper level, speak of the projection of American military might outside the nation's borders. In *SEAL Team 666*, the supernatural Other located in the imperial periphery merges with the anti-American terrorist, forming what could be termed a Gothic or monstrous terrorist. This Gothic terrorist typically comes out of, or hides in, its native East, and the threat it and its minions constitute can, within the logic of this type of horror story, only be addressed through organized military violence. *SEAL Team 666* belongs to a genre typically listed as *military horror*, but when considering the geopolitical relationship of these novels, this genre needs to be considered a subgenre of an enduring form of fiction most appropriately named *Imperial Horror*.¹

This chapter explores the close relationship between imperialism, Gothic, and horror fiction and the development of what has been termed Imperial Gothic into Imperial Horror. Thus, the chapter first describes the history of British Gothic and discusses the ways in which it is sometimes critical of empire and sometimes clearly supportive of the same. The chapter then argues that the literature of fear that was produced in the United States during the twentieth century—the time when this nation grew to become the dominant Anglo-empire—was premised on the British Imperial Gothic but that it continued to evolve into what is best termed Imperial Horror. Thus, US Imperial Horror accompanied the expansion of US global influence during the twentieth century and became increasingly militaristic, xenophobic, and jingoistic in the wake of the events of 9/11 and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. In this way, the chapter discusses how Imperial Horror narratives revolve around the danger posed by an apocalyptic Gothic terrorist invested with specific political and religious content related to the anxieties that have emerged in the post-9/11 era.

A SHORT HISTORY OF HORROR, GOTHIC, AND IMPERIALISM

Imperialism and colonialism are engines of horror that render asunder social, religious, and economic structures as well as bodies. With this in mind, any endeavor to justly describe the process will produce a horror story of sorts, and attempts in fiction or non-fiction to account for the effects of colonialism often read as such. In texts such as Joseph Conrad's indictment of King Leopold's predatory colonization of the Congo in *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and Frantz Fanon's dark account of violent French colonial oppression in Algeria in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), colonialism has been described as producing devastating violence and horror. Thus, it is not strange that authors who wish to portray this violence have turned to the horror genre. A useful example of what can be termed postcolonial horror is Australian author Mudrooroo's *The Undying* (1998), a novel that casts the invasive white Europeans that arrive to colonize Australia as vampires. The actual violence and disease that accompanied

European colonization are, thus, represented metaphorically in tropes common to horror fiction. Alongside this tradition, there is a great body of American writing that is rarely termed postcolonial, but which also speaks eloquently of the effect and legacy of the slavery that was central to the emergence of the pan-European imperial project during the seventeenth century. Thus, *The Undying* shares intellectual, historical, and metaphorical ground with American writer Toni Morrison's overtly Gothic *Beloved* (1980). This widely studied novel describes the individual sufferings of a group of slaves in pre-Civil War Kentucky, centering on the abject violence that is done to, and at times horrifically reproduced by, the novel's black protagonists.

Not all horror fiction that centers on imperialism is postcolonial, however. In Western horror writing in general, and in Anglophone horror in particular, authors have more often produced literature that function as a vehicle to legitimize imperialism. This literary tradition is, thus, better referred to as colonial or imperial than as postcolonial. There is a long tradition of scholarly inquiry into this tradition that considers the emergence of the first proper horror genre, usually referred to as the Gothic novel. This genre can be described both as a forerunner to the horror novel and as a distinct and still existing mode that has invaded a number of other modes and genres. In this way, Gothic can be used as a synonym for (early) horror writing, but the concept also refers to a narrative that includes certain conventions such as the haunted house and the encounter with the uncanny.

The tropes and encounters understood as Gothic have been theorized to produce a sense of *terror*, a feeling of alarm often described as a vertiginous anxiety of the unknown. By contrast, *horror* is typically understood as a form of writing that focuses on a paralyzing or contracting dread of the immanent destruction of the body.² In the words of Fred Botting, "terror marks the uplifting thrill where horror distinguishes a contraction at the imminence and unavoidability of the threat" (1996, p. 10). While the difference between these two experiences may perhaps always remain abstract and academic, terror can be described as the feared unknown, the possibility that the monster hides in the cellar or even inside a terrorized subject, while horror is the sudden appearance of the unnamable, the monster bursting out of the subject's supposedly inviolate body, or the actual completion of the horrific apocalypse at which the Gothic narrative of terror merely hints. While keeping the ways in which these two concepts merge into each other in mind, I will in this chapter use the designation "Gothic" when discussing the development of the British novel during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and, from there, move on to "horror" to designate the evolution of the genre, beginning in the United States in the twentieth century.

The Gothic novel appeared in the wake of the first enthusiasm for the Enlightenment at the end of the eighteenth century and it has been described as furnishing a paradigm for critiquing the dark practices in which early modernity arguably engaged. However, as Andrew Smith and William Hughes observe in *Empire and the Gothic: The Politics of Genre* (2003), it also represented

the non-Western world as a repository of what Edward Said has termed Orientalism (p. 3). This term refers to a large imaginary produced in the West, which depicts the Orient and its people as the negative reflection of those virtues and qualities with which the West wants to be associated. In early Gothic fiction, this Otherness is connected also to the occult, making the Oriental Other, even the East as such, into something monstrous and supernatural.

In other words, while the Gothic launched a furtive critique of the Enlightenment, it frequently reiterated stereotypical racist and sexist notions about the non-European world and, thus, helped fuel the early imperial project. William Beckford's early Gothic novel, *Vathek* (1786), illustrates this tendency through its depiction of the decadent Caliph Vathek, who inhabits an Oriental territory rife with demons, dark pleasures, horrific temptations, and ancient evil. Vathek himself engages in all manner of atrocities, including the sacrifice of children, to satisfy his lusts and to gain control over the world. In this way, the novel is both a map of Orientalist discourse and an example of how Orientalism was commodified in literature (Saglia 2002, p. 76).

The Gothic novel quickly became widely popular in its native Britain but also spread to other European nations and to the newly formed United States of America. In the early nineteenth century, the United States was, of course, a nation located in a colonial territory still inhabited by an indigenous population. In addition to this, the new nation had designs upon the great tracts of land located west of the Appalachian Mountains. In the century that followed, the United States pressed steadily westward, colonizing this territory through various strategies and removing or exterminating the indigenous nations with which it came into contact. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Gothic novel was used in the United States to speak about this process, especially as it merged with the captivity narrative that had become popular during the colonial era. This merger helped create what David Mogen has termed "Frontier Gothic" (1993). Early examples, written by authors such as Brockden Brown, William Hawthorne, and Edgar Allen Poe, tend to cast the confrontation between Native American nations and white settlers, or between white citizens and the (enslaved) black community, as a horror story. While this fiction sometimes uncovers a great undercurrent of unease with practices such as genocide and slavery, much of it also describes the alternative to white hegemony in the United States as the end of modernity and civilization. Thus, the indigenous population and the black slaves of the United States are often cast as monstrous Gothic Others in early American horror fiction. The use of (military) violence to counter the Gothic Other is also perceived, in nineteenth-century white American discourse, as necessary and legitimate, even, as argued by Richard Slotkin, as a regenerative practice (1973, p. 554).

To turn the attention to Britain again, the late nineteenth century was a time when British imperialism had become self-aware and when imperialism was, to quote John Hobson, on "everybody's lips" (1902, p. v). This awareness encouraged a widespread jingoism and imperial pride but also a fear that Britain, like all previous empires, would crumble and fall. In *Rule of Darkness*

(1988), Patrick Brantlinger has influentially identified a literary genre from this period that he terms “Imperial Gothic.” This specific genre comprises a number of late-Victorian Gothic texts either set in colonial Asia or Africa, or involving an Oriental, Gothic threat invading Britain from these territories. Written during an era when the British Empire was at the height of its power but also when it had begun to crumble, the British Imperial Gothic revolved around “[a]pocalyptic themes and images” and raised “anxieties about the ease with which civilization can revert to barbarism or savagery and, thus, about the weakening of Britain’s imperial hegemony” (Brantlinger 1988, p. 229). To help manage the fear that the British Empire had begun to decline, Imperial Gothic depicts how subaltern forces rise against the representatives of the British Empire only to be conquered through rituals of violence reminiscent of the violence with which the colonies were often acquired and controlled. These subaltern forces are located in, or come out of, the same imagined Orient that Beckford helped invent in *Vathek*. This Orient was frequently located to the Middle East or to India, but it can also be found in Japan or in Africa. In addition to this, China also caused great concern with its teeming millions and its foreign customs. Thus, what has been termed the Yellow Peril informs Imperial Gothic novels such as Richard Marsh’s *The Joss: A Reversion* (1901) or Sax Rohmer’s *The Mystery of Dr. Fu-Manchu* (1912–1913).

One of the most useful examples of the Imperial Gothic is Bram Stoker’s influential novel *Dracula* from 1897. Dracula comes to London from the liminal territory of Transylvania, a place where East and West, Christianity and paganism, and modernity and primitivism, converge. As Stephen D. Arata observes in a seminal article, Dracula’s purpose is to invert British imperialism, to colonize London, and to unleash an ontological and epistemological apocalypse by turning it into a kingdom of the undead. Arata refers to Dracula as an “Occidental Tourist,” but a better designation is arguably terrorist (1990, p. 623). By infecting the women of London with his tainted, atavistic blood, Dracula seeks to invoke a form of political change that will eventually topple the Empire itself. In his way stands a group of five white men who represent, on the one hand, the white masculine ideal with which British imperialism identified, and, on the other hand, scientific disciplines such as criminal anthropology and psychiatry that were also central to late-Victorian modernity and to the management of Otherness during this era. Their solution to the supernatural crisis is, thus, scientific and violent. The resolution to the transformative danger that Dracula and his (female) minions constitute is, first, to declare him a degenerate and then, in a contest of masculinity, to submit his body to deadly violence.

In addition to Dracula, Sheridan Le Fanu’s female vampire in *Carmilla* (1872), Richard Marsh’s Egyptian priestess in *The Beetle* (1897), and Harriet Brandt in Florence Marryat’s *The Blood of the Vampire* (1897) are some of the more well-known Gothic terrorists of the Victorian era. Like Dracula, these characters are all invested with a complex Otherness theorized in the novels as a form of degeneration. Thus, their Otherness arises not only from a geographical and cultural distance, but also from a number of imagined racial,

sexual, and ontological anomalies. In Marsh's novel, *The Beetle*, first assumed to be male, turns out to be a preternaturally ugly Egyptian female, who is also a shape changer capable of transforming into a gigantic insect, as well as a powerful mesmerist who can control the weak minded. Similarly, *Dracula* can transform into a gigantic wolf or into a mist, and an infusion of his blood will make the victim his undead servant. Thus, the terrorist villain of the Imperial Gothic, especially when capable of mesmerism or carrying contagious blood in his or her veins, threatens epistemological and ontological contagion as well as physical violence. It is this contagion, as much as the violence, that threatens the fabric of empire in Imperial Gothic fiction.

Thus, Imperial Gothic—with its essential division of the world into civilized and uncivilized, modern and primitive, rational and irrational, its dismay of sexual difference, its reliance on white masculinity, its dread of the supernatural, contagious terrorist, and its fear of the apocalyptic collapse of modernity—can be described as an early form of Imperial Horror. While the two are identical in many ways, Imperial Horror moves beyond the temporal and geographical spaces of the Imperial Gothic. Imperial Horror takes place not primarily in late-Victorian London or in the (British) colonies but in any Western nation or in any non-Western global arena where geographical or political borders are much less important than the ability to project military strength. Imperial Horror is also different in that it is concerned with slightly different narrative and aesthetic content, focusing, as discussed above, on the immediate and harrowing confrontation with the massive and wide-ranging destruction of both the physical and political body.

IMPERIAL HORROR AND THE RISE OF US EMPIRE

According to much twentieth-century historiography, including some described as postcolonial, imperialism was dismantled as a practice during the 1960s and 1970s, when the European empires let go of their final colonies. However, and as argued by more recent historical research, this era did not mark the end of imperialism. Rather, as argued by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, the latter half of the twentieth century experienced a shift away from formal ownership of territory toward a more complex, networked, and decentralized form of imperialism that relied just as much on soft, economic, and cultural power as on military might and the occupation of territory (Hardt and Negri 2000). The most important agent in this development was the United States of America and, as later-day military historian Andrew Bacevich have argued, this nation “came to play a role that cannot be understood except as a variant of empire” (2004, p 30).

American horror fiction from the twentieth century corroborates Bacevich's analysis as it speaks clearly about imperial concerns. There is a great deal of Imperial Horror written in the United States that maintains the apocalyptic perspective, the racist and sexist paradigms, and even the plot lines and central villains of the British Imperial Gothic. The pulp fiction magazines that served

as one important outlet for horror return repeatedly to the watered-out Frankenstein myth of Universal Horror film, as well as to the vampire character. When the most dominant, post-World War II writer of horror, Stephen King, reinvented Dracula in *Salem's Lot* (1975), much of the racist and misogynist content of the original survived the transfer. Young women are impaled by groups of men, evil comes from overseas, and whiteness reigns. However, there is also a horror tradition in the United States that critically interrogates empire and the dominance of the white male. Central to this tradition is Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (1954), in which the white male protagonist finds himself the lone human survivor in a world overrun by a vampire virus. The reader, long accustomed to this particular narrative trajectory, identifies with the protagonist's struggle against the vampire apocalypse until the very end when it becomes apparent that, in a world of vampires, the surviving human, who spends his days violently destroying the new vampire breed, is the true terrorist of the story. It is the white, male protagonist who is the anomaly and who must be exorcized. The apocalypse here cleanses the earth of the destructive presence that white masculinity is seen to constitute.

To be able to perceive and appreciate the ways in which the United States must also be considered an empire, and the way that this empire informed and is informed by the literary form of Imperial Horror, it is necessary to briefly address the belated scholarly consideration of this entity in the twenty-first century and about the different global challenges it has faced especially since 9/11. While the concept of US Empire was not alien to historical or sociological writing in the twentieth century, it was not widely discussed by scholarship and politicians until 2003. This discussion was perhaps a perfectly natural revision of an antiquated view of global and US history, but it was also contingent on a series of political and geopolitical events, including the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and of Iraq in 2003. While historians and intellectuals such as Noam Chomsky, Chalmers Johnson, and David Harvey used the concept of US Empire to indict a long history of US global expansion, writers such as Max Boot argued fiercely that "U.S. imperialism has been the greatest force for good in the world during the past century" and that the United States needed to seize global leadership by invading the Middle East (Boot 2003).³

However, the preemptive invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and the attempt to seize global control that they constituted did not go well. Following accusations of war crimes, the revelations that the administration that had engineered the invasions had done so on false grounds, images of torture, and a failure to bring stability to the Middle East, a great sense of unease descended on the United States. This sense of unease was increased by the great recession of 2007, the rise of ISIS, the global refugee crisis, a series of terrorist attacks primarily outside Europe and the United States but also inside the borders of these territories, and, in the background, the increasing economic and military might of China and the Russian bid for the Ukraine.

Thus, the new understanding of the United States as not simply a powerful nation state but a de facto empire occurred at a time when the United States seemed to face immense challenges to its global dominance, to its economy, and to its security. In many ways, these challenges recall the ones that faced Britain a century ago and helped to cement an image of the United States as “an aging empire watching dreadfully as rivals threaten to take their slice of the pie” (Go 2011, p. 167). As I have argued in *The American Imperial Gothic* (2014), it is precisely this kind of historical and discursive framing of the present that feeds Imperial Horror. Contemporary Imperial Horror is, thus, a genre that primarily explores the possibility that the United States is a derelict empire.

There are novels that take the opportunity to query the politics of militarism that arguably fuel US imperialism. For example, Justin Cronin’s ambitious and critically acclaimed *The Passage* (2010–2016) trilogy chronicles a desperate attempt by the US military to harness the power of a vampire virus discovered in South America. Set in the near future, Cronin’s series describes a world where terrorism and global instability has encouraged a new type of Manhattan Project that will ensure US global dominance: “Think of the American Way as something truly long-term. As in permanent” (Cronin 2012, p. 100). Yet, it is not outside political forces that bring the apocalypse, but instead the imperial hubris expressed in this quotation. Similarly, Alden Bell’s *The Reaper are the Angels* (2011) and M. R. Carey’s *The Girl with all the Gifts* (2014) powerfully query patriarchal and imperial ideologies. These are Imperial Horror novels that give form to the sense that a particular political era, even modernity itself, has come to an end, and imagine what comes after as an intellectual, material, and emotional wasteland. However, they give no precise political shape to the undead and the demons that bring this end. In this, they are different from a vast number of Imperial Horror novels that tell the story of how official or unofficial US agents resist, rather than succumb to, the coming apocalypse. As in *SEAL Team 666*, these much more conservative texts tell stories about how Special Forces soldiers and scientists combat orientalized and racialized monsters in neo-colonial spaces to keep the (Western) world safe for democracy and capitalism. In this way, these narratives retain the white, masculine perspective prevalent in the Imperial Gothic and invest the Gothic Other with distinct political and sexual shapes that link them to the nation states, the ideologies, the religions, the cultures, and the sexualities that are typically perceived to challenge US global dominance.

The foremost such threat is—in the wake of 9/11, the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, the war in Syria, and recent global terrorism—militant, fundamentalist representatives of Islam. The casting of the Islamic fundamentalist terrorist as demon and monster may seem like a new strategy, but it can be related to the tendency to demonize the imperial Other found in early Gothic, such as Beckford’s aforementioned *Vathek*. The US soldiers in *SEAL Team 666* are informed that “a belief in the spiritual is at the root of Islam and it was known

that certain caliphs and mullahs were deeply involved with the supernatural” (Ochse 2012, p. 141). The Islamic terrorist as demon also appears in Jennifer Rardin’s *Once Bitten, Twice Shy* (2007), in which former Special Forces, CIA agent Jaz Parks takes on the Sons of Paradise, “the most extreme of the extremist terrorist groups” as they prepare to set a soul-eating demon loose to spread the Red Plague, and in Christopher Farnsworth’s *The President’s Vampire* (2011), in which Osama bin Laden transforms into an immensely powerful scaly lizard before being dispatched with a hand grenade pushed down his throat (Rardin 2007, p. 16; Farnsworth 2011, p. 8). Similarly, in Dean Koontz’s *Odd Hours* (2008), the protagonist stops a plan by a “Middle Eastern” nation to explode multiple nuclear arms in US cities, and in Jonathan Maberry’s *Patient Zero* (2009), ex-Army Ranger Joe Ledger is recruited to lead the fight against Islamic terrorist El Mujahid and the zombie virus he has engineered in an effort to overthrow the United States. The zombies that beset Ledger are highly contagious and, just like the bite of Dracula, turn the human victim away from moral propriety and from a patriotic love of the homeland. Just like the terrorist is imagined as monster, the creed of the terrorist is here cast as monstrous so that the biological contagion spread by the undead zombie or vampire terrorist common in Imperial Horror is imagined as also political and religious.

In other words, the disease that loosens all societal, cultural, and sexual obligations and that turns the subject into a supremely violent and voracious consumer of colleagues, friends, and close family ultimately describes how a politics understood as profoundly alien to the United States and the West invades this region. This invasion narrative has been told many times before, in Stoker’s aforementioned *Dracula* and in Jack Finney’s novel *The Body Snatchers* from 1954, but, in this most recent version, it is far more bloody, apocalyptic, and violent, often echoing the carnage of 9/11, and the wars in the Middle East, as recorded by television news and, increasingly, by social media produced by soldiers involved in the fighting.

Not all Imperial Horror revolves around the United States’ attempt to dominate the Middle East in a response to terrorism, however. In the widely popular post-apocalyptic zombie horror novels *World War Z* (2006) and *Day by Day Armageddon* (2004), the contagion comes instead out of the Far East and China. Echoing the fear of the “yellow peril” of the Imperial Gothic, these novels reference the same anxiety about hordes of people disregarding all territorial, political, and epistemological borders. Thus, these stories are typically invasion narratives that show first how US global dominance collapses and how its colonial practices are inverted. Then, they describe how united military efforts and the reliance on (Fascist) regimes and tactics are able to cleanse the infected territories and reclaim the colonized lands. As in other Imperial Horror, the bite of the Other is infectious and dissolves the individual’s sense of self. The infected instead becomes a minion in the service of the invader, a tool that spreads a virus that is, again, just as ideological as it is biological.

IMPERIAL HORROR IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Imperial Horror is best defined as a subgenre of horror fiction that casts the imperial Other as supernatural terrorist monster and which insists that any challenge to (Western) global dominance must be met with (military) violence. Within the imaginary, discursive space that Imperial Horror creates, the gun is an extension and ultimate refinement of modernity and the only tool that lends useful agency to an individual. Imperial Horror, thus, revolves around the sense that empires are as transient as they are necessary, that constant vigilance is essential, and that monsters constantly threaten in the colonial periphery as well as in the beating heart of the imperial metropolis. When the presumed enemies of empire are imagined as monsters in this way, the violence that empires must use to demonstrate their dominance takes the form of self-defense. The military solution dramatized by so many Imperial Horror novels, and which has been practiced routinely by the United States, can even be described as the only form of political agency that this form of literature can imagine. There can be no negotiation, no attempts at diplomacy, when you are dealing with the terrorists as monster.

However, even as pro-Imperial Horror seeks to re-erect the epistemological and material barriers that the Other as monster break down, the fact that these barriers can be challenged give rise to anxiety. Thus, whether furtively or openly critical of imperialist practices and the discourses that support it, or fiercely supportive of the same, Imperial Horror revolves around the sense that Empire cannot last and that Otherness will eventually shatter the foundation upon which Western modernity rests. Part of the imperial paradigm, as established by Edward Gibbon in *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–1789), is that all empires eventually fall. This is the only imaginable historical trajectory, also for the US Empire of the early second millennium. Thus, even Ochse's patriotic *SEAL Team 666* records an ultimately futile struggle against political, material, and ideological ruin.

NOTES

1. See Agnieszka Soltysik Monnet and Steffen Hantke. Eds. *War Gothic in Literature and Culture* (London: Routledge, 2016) for a discussion on how Gothic and Horror has become increasingly informed by war narratives and tropes.
2. For a discussion of the difference between terror and horror, see Fred Botting, *Gothic* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996).
3. See Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000), Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Supremacy* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003), and David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arata, Stephen D. 1990. The Occidental Tourist: Dracula and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonisation. *Victorian Studies* 33 (4): 621–645.
- Bacevich, Andrew. 2004. *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Boot, Max. 2003. U.S. Imperialism: A Force for Good. *National Post*, May 13. <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/us-imperialism-force-good/p5959>. Accessed January 24, 2017.
- Botting, Fred. 1996. *Gothic*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Brantlinger, Patrick. 1988. *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2003. *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Supremacy*. New York: Metropolitan Books.
- Cronin, Justin. 2012. *The Twelve*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Farnsworth, Christopher. 2011. *The President's Vampire*. New York: Putnam.
- Go, Julian. 2011. *Patterns of Empire: The British and America Empires, 1688 to the Present*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. 2000. *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Harvey, David. 2003. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Höglund, Johan. 2014. *The America Imperial Gothic: Popular Culture, Empire, Violence*. Surrey, UK: Ashgate.
- Johnson, Chalmers. 2000. *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of America Empire*. New York: Metropolitan Books.
- Koontz, Dean. 2008. *Odd Hours*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Maberry, Jonathan. 2009. *Patient Zero*. New York: St Martin's Griffin.
- Mogen, David, Scott Sanders, and Joanne Karspinski. 1993. *Frontier Gothic: Terror and Wonder at the Frontier in America Literature*. Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.
- Ochse, Weston. 2012. *SEAL Team 666*. New York: Thomas Dunne Books.
- Rardin, Jennifer. 2007. *Once Bitten, Twice Shy*. New York: Orbit Books.
- Saglia, Diego. 2002. William Beckford's 'Sparks of Orientalism' and the Material-Discursive Orient of British Romanticism. *Textual Practice* 16 (1): 75–92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502360110103702>. Accessed January 24, 2017.
- Slotkin, Richard. 2000. *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the America Frontier 1600–1860*. New ed. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. Originally published in 1973.
- Smith, Andrew, and William Hughes. 2003. *Empire and the Gothic: The Politics of Genre*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Soltysik, Agnieszka Monnet, and Steffen Hantke, eds. 2016. *War Gothic in Literature and Culture*. London: Routledge.



Postmodern Literary Labyrinths: Spaces of Horror Reimagined

Katharine Cox

The labyrinth provides both a metaphorical basis and a narratological mode for postmodernism's textual experiments. Critics such as J. Hillis Miller (1992) and Michel Foucault (2004) have used the labyrinth to reflect upon narrative theory and criticism, which Wendy B. Faris has proposed reflects a labyrinth-orientated criticism (1988). This return to the labyrinth is typically sinister. Postmodern labyrinths are complex (*The Unconsoled*), disorientating and overwhelming for the walker (*Hawksmoor*; *City of Glass*), where the labyrinth is reimagined as a textual prison without the Minotaur (*The Name of the Rose*, *House of Leaves*, *City of Glass*) and as a space for undoing gender (*James Miranda Barry*, *The Passion*). In these spaces, the past erupts into the present (*Passing Time*, *Hawksmoor*, *The Passion*, *The General in his Labyrinth*) and, specifically, in this chapter, is represented as a confrontation with the archetypal mother (*The Passion of New Eve*, *House of Leaves*).

Labyrinths have long been spaces of horror. In its simplest iteration, the Cretan myth explores a ritualized home-prison for the monstrous Minotaur. This deformed child is born out of Minos's blasphemy and the coupling of his mother Pasiphaë with a sacred bull. Other appropriations of the labyrinth have focussed on metaphysical transformation (Christian labyrinths in the middle ages), gender and fertility (turf mazes), and ritualized entrapment (gothic labyrinths). Modernist representations, in turn, inspired a different type of engagement with mythology.¹ Ironically, in their response to archaeological discoveries at Knossos and Troy, modernist labyrinths emphasized a discontinuity,

K. Cox (✉)
Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, UK

the horror of a perpetual present broken off from the past whereby the artist-writer is entrapped in the labyrinth/world as prison.²

This chapter explores representations of the postmodern labyrinth in Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) and Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000) as reimagined spaces of horror. These texts draw directly on the Cretan labyrinth (specifically ideas of complexity, house, and ritual) and represent the labyrinth as an *unheimlich* site of maternal horror. Both novels are concerned with the (re)construction of self. Similarly, Jeanette Winterson's novel *The Passion* (1987) communicates the potentiality of the labyrinth to provide a space for more diverse identities. In Winterson's novel, despite the murder of the Minotaur character in a labyrinthine city, depictions of horror exist outside of the labyrinth in war-torn Napoleonic Europe. Other representations of the labyrinth in postmodern literature, such as *The Name of the Rose* (1980) and *Hawksmoor* (1985), are notable for the absence or marginality of women (though it might be argued the labyrinth symbolizes this absence and marginality).³ All these postmodern novels represent a return to the Cretan labyrinth that privileges the confrontation with an anthropomorphic architecture. However, unlike other postmodern representations of the labyrinth, which are typically nihilistic, I argue that both Carter and Danielewski's novels offer hopeful (though ambiguous) outcomes, achieved through the reimagining of the labyrinth as a space of horror, trauma, and transformation.

Both Carter and Danielewski represent the labyrinth as a physical site (or sites) to be explored. The labyrinths are usually described as difficult and complex (multicursal in form),⁴ in a deliberate engagement with classical labyrinths. These representations are corporeal (Ayrton 1974). In Danielewski's novel, in particular, the textual form is also deliberately labyrinthine, with false starts and disappearing and elliptical passages of text. Footnotes and academic analysis foreground the relevance of classical examples, but representations of the labyrinth are multiple and used to represent the mother as house, the novel itself, the book as mother, and house as book. An encounter with the labyrinthine space is a bodily confrontation with origin, which threatens nihilism, but which I argue results in transformation.

Horror is experienced both by characters in the novels but also by the reader-critic, who is confronted with overwhelming mythological and psychoanalytical play. Carter's work pre-empts psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva's emphasis on bodily horror and writerly excess, while Danielewski is responding directly to Kristeva's ideas (1982). As systems of knowledge and myths of power are repeatedly deconstructed, the novels direct the reader to the quality of the labyrinth to reflect the universal human condition through its close affinity to the body. Critical focus on Carter's writing has tended to emphasize the manner in which it "de-mythologizes" (Gruss 2009; Cavallaro 2011). While the novel appears to debunk many systems of thought, including psychoanalysis, the motif of the labyrinth remains. This surviving mythological structure is hopeful and offers a space to undo and reimagine ideas of gendered identity. Similarly, Danielewski uses the labyrinth as a "mythical method" to give form

to trauma and the process of recovery (Dawson 2015, p. 285). Through a focus on scarring as a bodily trauma, I read Truant's body as marked by familial horror. His rereading of his body enables him to recover his past. Ultimately, the overt complexity of Danielewski's novel belies an insistent return to "the family," achieved through the novel's labyrinthine form and content (Toth 2013, p. 182).

THE PASSION OF NEW EVE

Both novels are set in the United States and use the labyrinth as an appropriated and defining myth of origin.⁵ Published in 1977, Carter's sf novel extrapolates the racial, gender, and religious tensions of the United States to the point of civil war. Read in 2017, the novel is unerringly prescient.⁶ In Carter's evocation of North America, she relentlessly parodies the Women's movement through examples of its radical militancy and worship of mother earth.⁷ The novel's English protagonist Evelyn is utterly transformed by his experience of the country. Evelyn lands in New York as male and ends the novel on the west coast of America as female and pregnant, having been captured, raped, and forcibly transformed into a woman by Mother, leader of the Women's movement. Despite the horror of Eve/Evelyn's many un/fortunate experiences, including those at the hands of Zero and the Children's Crusade, the tone of the novel is that of a fantastical and humorous road trip. The novel is a complex exploration of gender through ideas of performativity and embodiment. Eve/Evelyn learns to perform femininity but is only truly transformed by the sexual awakening with Tristessa (a trans figure who is initially identified as a female old Hollywood icon but who is revealed as bodily male), her ensuing pregnancy, and return to maternal origins.

From the moment we begin reading *The Passion of New Eve*, we enter a ritualized space. Carter's rigorous exploration of labyrinths exaggerates and then subverts horror tropes. She first intensifies the labyrinth as site of feminine horror before reimagining it as a space of potential. In so doing, the labyrinth moves from a manifestation of horror (male confronted with female), remaking (male remade as bodily female), to undoing (beach cave) and potential evolution of the hermaphrodite (Eve's child). From New York as negation, Beulah female as abstraction, Tristessa's mansion as woman as symbol, to the final cave and Eve's womb, which act as places for this undoing of gender, these spaces stress a connection to origin. Carter directly engages with the labyrinth as a space for gendered transformation. Furthermore, the novel's narrative structure is also recursive and mazy, as Lizzy Welby notes, "the sequential chronology of the novel is synchronically distorted" (2014, p. 75). Critics such as Dani Cavallaro (2011, see also Karpinsky 2000), taking Carter's lead (1983), have read Carter's persistent and over-elaborate engagement with myth as a deliberate attempt to "de-mythologize" systems of power and gender through the "anti-myth" novel (Gruss 2009).⁸ On the one hand, Carter demonstrates that symbols are socially constructed, whereby "[a] critique of

these symbols is a critique of our lives" (Carter 1977, p. 1). However, Carter has always been a more sophisticated and slippery thinker.⁹ Another way of reading this relationship between self and symbol is to consider the bodily relationship between the two. Rather than debunk all mythology fully, I argue that Carter reworks the phenomena of the labyrinth—stripped back and reclaimed as a metaphor of the female body—as a symbol for narrative and identity transformation. The labyrinth endures as a place of remaking, undoing, and rebirth in the novel.

The Passion of New Eve resolutely retains the imagery and iconography of the labyrinth, as a place that is born of the self and to which we return. It exists in "anteriority," outside of time (p. 163). The symbol that defines Eve/Evelyn¹⁰ has been waiting for her/him before birth. The labyrinth is both an external symbol to signify inner life but also an inner reality (the womb, brain, gut, inner ear, and fingerprints). His journey through and toward the labyrinths in the novel is actually a return to origin; every origin is a return to the mother. This promise of return is filled with terror and horror. Evelyn is repeatedly overcome by paralysis when faced with the representative of the female (such as Leilah and Mother). This horror is often parodic. The character's sense of horror lessens as the journey continues, as Evelyn's horror (at the symbols of the overwhelming female body) is commuted into Eve's bodily sufferings (her passion) at the hands of Zero, before joyous unions as a hermaphrodite with Tristessa in the desert and finally pregnancy. It is Eve/Evelyn's engagement with the labyrinth that forms the source of horror within the novel, but also the possibility for rebirth and freedom.

After landing in New York, the coherency of Evelyn's identity is challenged immediately through emersion in the city-labyrinth. Described in a reimagining of a return to the womb, the city's "lurid, Gothic darkness [...] closed over my head entirely and became my world" (1977, p. 6). The city is a body politic that is decaying and in revolt. Angry Women proclaim their threat through the graffiti of their insignia: "the bared teeth in the female circle" (p. 7). This *vagina dentata* finally "bites" and castrates Evelyn in the labyrinthine, subterranean caves of Beulah. Evelyn is lured to his castration by Leilah/Lillith. Supposedly a child of the city, Leilah is later revealed as Lillith (Adam's first wife and mother of demons), sent by her M/mother. The narrator describes her body in verbose, animalistic terms so that she is always more than a woman—"some in-between thing" (p. 16). Perhaps to absolve himself of his treatment of Leilah, his descriptions transform her into an enchantress. In doing so, Leilah is portrayed as both Ariadne and the Minotaur (half-human, half-nonhuman). Recalling Arthur Evans's interpretation of Ariadne as a priestess and dancer of the labyrinth, Leilah understands the city as a bodily construction and is able to dwell there. Leilah (and her other incarnation as Lillith) represents what Elizabeth Wilson identifies as the fearful female deity, hidden within cityscapes (1992).

Evelyn's sexual encounter with Leilah is a parody of gendered horror. In the darkness of the hallways of her apartment block, the narrator panics as the

“darkness inside terrified me” (p. 20). This goes beyond the darkness of the city. This is the “archaic, atavistic panic before original darkness and silence, before the mystery of herself,” her body (1997, p. 20). Evelyn’s fear is based on his recognition of the female body as negation. Finally, as she leads him to her flat, the graffiti on the walls nudge at Evelyn’s memory: “INTROITE ET HIC DII SUNT [ENTER, FOR HERE THE GODS ARE]” (p. 21 and p. 44; author’s emphasis and translation).¹¹ Carter’s translation seems deliberate in suggesting that these gods (unlike their Greek counterparts) are geographically or domestically restricted. Evelyn falls further as ritualized space is intensified. The metaphorical fall is also physical, through a threshold, as “lured by gravity, [...] I plunged [...] into] the poisoned wound of love between her thighs” (p. 21). The descent into the classical underworld is achieved by passing through the Cumaean Gates, picked out with the iconography of the labyrinth (in Virgil’s *Aeneid*; Catto 1988). This notion of the labyrinth as descent into hell is used repeatedly by Danielewski. In Chaps. 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13, as Navidson’s team descends into the labyrinth, which is represented in an experimental narrative layout, Truant accesses his repressed traumatic memories and can be said to lead him back to his personal “hell.” The corporeal labyrinth that Evelyn enters when he penetrates Leilah is the surrender of his descent into hell. The labyrinthine imagery of their sexual encounter is redoubled by the threat of her apartment in a house “with its many, many rooms” (1977, p. 20). The house is anthropomorphic. It reflects the potential of the womb to act as a house or home, but also recalls the Cretan labyrinth as house-prison. Evelyn, having been born male, has exited this maternal house, dissociated himself from his origins, and is fearful of return. Having sex with Leilah is a reminder of this loss. The conflation of the house as bodily labyrinth returns both in the descriptions of Beulah and is transposed when Eve experiences orgasm as a female. So, this house turns from a metaphor of exile from the mother toward a place of pleasure and potentiality. As in Carter’s other writings, the experience of erotic pleasure as a woman has the potential to transform patriarchal narratives. Here, the space of the labyrinth is reclaimed.

Fleeing Leilah (his mirror of self) and the city, Evelyn begins a road trip west into the sterile desert interior (the mirror of his heart). This is a journey into self “through the curvilinear galleries of the brain towards the core of the labyrinth within us” (1977 p. 35). The landscape of the desert is both ancient and familiar in that Evelyn recognizes it as the mirror of his own interiority. The overwhelming landscape draws forth a “peculiar horror” as he confronts the landscape of his soul (p. 38). His machismo behind this trip into the “wild west” quickly unravels as he finds himself lost, famished, and alone before his capture and transportation to Beulah. Evelyn enters Beulah as Evelyn and leaves as Eve (bodily female but unreconciled to her new form), transformed by the monster at the heart of Beulah, Mother.¹²

Held in a cell at the center of the maze, Evelyn’s surroundings intentionally mimic a womb. The subterranean labyrinth recalls the competing site for the Cretan labyrinth, prior to Evans’s excavations at Knossos, at the quarried cav-

erns of Gortyna. In these subterranean labyrinths, *katabasis* can be reversed, as to retrace your steps offers a means of return or a path to redemption, but there is a price to be paid. Evelyn is encouraged to “[j]ourney back, journey backwards to the source!” but is utterly lost in the convolutions of Beulah’s geography (p. 50). This is the contortion of the Christian labyrinth realized in gothic literature. The planned intricacy of the labyrinth, without God as guide, confounds the walker (see Pope 1994, p. 45).¹³ While gothic labyrinths are terrible spaces of transgression and fear, they lack the sustained evocation of bodily horror achieved in this chapter’s postmodern examples. Evelyn is unable to navigate or dwell within the perplexing “female” geography of Beulah. However, in woman’s form, she is able to learn “the plan of the labyrinth” and escape (1977, p. 77). The labyrinth is the literal embodiment of the interior—of the inner ear, the brain—and, what remains unsaid, the womb (p. 53). This is a fragmentary return of Antonio Filarete’s concepts of architecture and bodily unity (1972). As Evelyn descends the labyrinth, his terror is kept just in check by the inevitability of meeting with a Minotaur-figure, this in the inverse of Truant’s expectations in *House of Leaves*. This is the meeting with that which he has suppressed and exiled to “the lowest room at the root of my brain” (Carter 1977, p. 54). Estranged from the mother in psychoanalytical terms, Evelyn’s labyrinthine journeys mimic her abject form, and so, despite his fear of her, it is an inevitable return. Unlike the hyper-masculine meeting between Theseus and the Minotaur, Evelyn is faced with a female abstraction made flesh.

Forever cast out of woman’s womb, at “journey’s end as a man,” Evelyn is stupefied with horror (p. 56). “The abject maternal body enrages the (male) subject as it is a constant reminder of his origins” (Welby 2014, p. 74). These are origins to which he believes he is unable to return, but the former scientist Mother has other plans. The horror of the castration is one of anticipation. Evelyn has been told his fate and is led to the altar/operating table like “a sacrificial animal” (Carter 1977, p. 65). Evelyn is raped, castrated by the phallic mother, his body remodeled, and inner cavity carved out to form a womb that mirrors the landscape of Beulah. In doing so, Carter makes manifest (and parodies) the symbolic fear of castration that underpins Freudian psychoanalytical thought. However, the horror of this assault is undermined by the hyperbole of the situation: the “mutilated” Mother wears both a false beard and medical gown. The reconstruction of the external and internal body does not initially result in a change in identity. Though this is a physical transformation into a woman’s form—created by surgery, with lessons on femininity from Hollywood and doses of female hormones—Eve is not female. She is an “artificial changeling,” a “Tiresias,” whose “cock in my head, still, twitched at the sight of my [female] self” (pp. 68, 71). Eve/Evelyn’s nightmare is not one she can immediately wake from. Eve/Evelyn’s journey takes her ever onward, as “I have not yet reached the end of the maze” (p. 145). This movement through the labyrinth is associated with horror and experience for Eve/Evelyn. Indeed, there is no ultimate conclusion to the journey. “[T]he perfect circle, the vicious circle, [is] the dead end,” and such endings result in new beginnings (pp. 168, 167).

It is not until “Eve returns to her mother” and passes through a final, sulphurous cave that she can truly begin (p. 176). Entering the fissure in the rocks (a further labyrinth-womb), time runs backward and allows an erasure of her entry into the symbolic order (the destruction of her love as symbol, the non-reflecting mirror). In a state of anteriority (represented by amber that reverts to a viscous state), her construct of self as a male and as a female is erased. She is released from myths of her own and others’ making. Like the symbol of the “archaeopteryx” she sees (“bird and lizard both at once”), Eve(lyn) is a union of contraries (p. 180). This symbol of her internal nature offers hope. She is the literal manifestation of Beulah, as she carries a baby with two fathers and two mothers. Finally, the character becomes reconciled to the ambiguous form that mirrors the “house” of the life growing within her and the umbilical cord, which “anchors” her fetus. Exiting the cave as Eve(lyn), she can reflect on her pregnancy and await her final transformation into mother. The complexity of the child is unresolved. It is the unborn next evolutionary step, the promise of a hermaphrodite child born of contraries. America cannot be the place of its birth. Instead, the ocean, the female element “where, at the dawn of time, we were all born,” offers her passage the place of birth (p. 144). The labyrinth re-entered.

HOUSE OF LEAVES

House of Leaves is a notoriously complex and convoluted horror novel. Its narrative excess is the physical realization of Jorge Luis Borges’s “The Garden of Forking Paths,” which is both book and labyrinth. “The horror in the novel and the horror of the novel replicate each other” (Botting 2015, p. 243; my emphasis). Our transgression by reading the novel itself (“[t]his is not for you”) creates a reading experience that is itself *unheimlich* (p. x). Rather than see its horror as a type of “camouflage,” I read *House of Leaves* as being concerned with horror, its origins and processes of recovery (Hayles 2002a). Horror erupts from places of familiarity and domesticity. Horror is found at home, and what is more fearful than a home that is also a labyrinth (Botting 2015)? Danielewski reimagines the trope of the classical labyrinth to engage with horror, fear, and a cycle of recovery. The text’s obsessive consideration of narrative, remediation, epistemology, and subjectivity has drawn significant responses from critics such as N. Katherine Hayles, Alison Gibbons, and Fred Botting.¹⁴ The layered and jostling narratives directly and repeatedly represent trauma and horror, while the textual experience for the reader becomes labyrinthine. As Gibbons has shown, the novel’s horror is engendered in part by the highly referential boundary-crossing act of reading, between text and reader (2011, 2012a, b). Both *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, the labyrinth is the expression of the book, the reading experience, the suppression, and re-emergence of trauma (Navidson with Delial, Truant with his mother), and of maternal origins. This is a multiplication of spatial horror, what Botting terms “horror-space” (2015).

The novel is presented as an archive of written texts, purportedly concerned with an investigation into a domestic labyrinth by filmmaker Will Navidson. The emergent labyrinth appears to respond to the psychological state of those who enter and is presented as the physical manifestation of Navidson's guilt surrounding his treatment of Delial,¹⁵ as well as a means to consider Johnny Truant's trauma and loss of his mother (Danielewski 2000, pp. 392–93). In testing the validity of the Navidson record, Truant begins to explore his past through his relationships to his mother. In doing so, he is pulled into a consideration of the labyrinth (or is this a labyrinth of his own making?) and appears to draw the reader in, too. It is not a place to dwell, we can “only dwell upon it” (Slocombe 2005). It is easy to lose your way, to pause and double back, or to become overwhelmed by the novel's size and intricacy. The active reader/writer may follow Truant's invitation to write on and comment about the novel and so continue the meta-commentary (p. xxiii).¹⁶ Though Alan Gibbs has chided what he sees as an over-reliance on “centring” Truant's influence on the Navidson record and reading the record as a representation of his traumatic relationship with his mother, Truant's narrative often stands for a central analysis of the novel's invocation of horror (2014). It is Truant's address to “you” that directly draws the reader into the novel (p. xxiii).¹⁷ The horror is recursive, written on the body, and reaches out to the reader (Botting 2015).

Navidson, Zampanò, and Truant are concerned with the narration, criticism, and interpretations of the incursion into the house-labyrinth. Pelafina's story reveals the traumatic root of the textual labyrinth as grounded in her experience.¹⁸ These narratives play with the idea of an anthropomorphic architecture, which is also textual. The unreliability of each narrative is evident. The Navidson record is supposedly a hoax, Zampanò is dead, Truant missing, and his mother, Pelafina, institutionalized prior to death. In these protagonists' stories, the female body is significant and is explored through the motif of the labyrinth. Navidson has moved to Ash Tree Lane to repair his relationship with his wife following the trauma of photographing Delial, Zampanò appears haunted by lost guide Béatrice (in her many guises, p. xxii), and Truant's trauma is in symbiosis with his mother's (Cox 2006). Danielewski is playing with narrative reliability and developing a type of exaggerated writing cure, which is part critique. Truant is remarkable for his textual curiosity. He experiences horror leading to prolonged uncertainty and phobia as a result of his reading of, and interaction with, the labyrinthine manuscript. His responses are located in his fear of textuality, specifically that he may be a textual subject written by his mother.¹⁹ This leads to his fearful response to the signifiers of textuality and, by extension, his local environment (which is represented by the text). Truant presents his experience as horror in the introduction, caused by his task to recover the mass of words from Zampanò. For Zampanò, words have the power to “soothe” and provide “comfort [found] cradled in a woman's words” (Danielewski 2000, p. xxii). However, Truant recognizes Zampanò's words as the “[e]ndless snarls of words,” left after the beast has moved on (xvii). His remediated presentation of them is not initially one of comfort.

Zampanò's academic sections that respond to the Cretan labyrinth are struck through and so "under erasure," which ironically increases their significance. The passages reveal a complex architecture as site of familial horror. The myth explores nation building, blasphemy, betrayal, justice, technology, artifice, bestiality, disability, ritual, murder, abandonment, suicide, and finally threatened incest, and infanticide. Like Carter's protagonist Evelyn, Truant may have no choice over this transformation. These sections relate to the labyrinth as "a trope of repression," which denotes a familial tragedy and reveals the labyrinth-house as prison (p. 110). Like Evelyn's descent into the labyrinth, Truant is expecting to face the Minotaur at every turn. Partly the premonition of this meeting causes him anxiety, but it is also the fear that he himself is the Minotaur. This appears to be brought about both by his mother's naming of him as a mythical creature and by his treatment by his abusive stepfather, Raymond, who calls him "beast." Truant emphasizes this comparison through his clue, to turn "The Minotaur into a homie," an anagram of "O Im he Minotaur" (p. 337). The hybrid Minotaur is the only character able to dwell comfortably within the labyrinth (as Leilah/Lillith demonstrated in New York). The structure serves both as his home and prison, until confronted and killed by his other (Theseus). However, Truant is not comfortable with the labyrinthine imagery. He struggles to dwell as the labyrinth represents and causes him to confront his traumatic engagements with his mother. The Minotaur is absent. Horror is elicited not by the expected confrontation with the monster but by encounter with the anthropomorphic labyrinth and its ability to entrap, nullify, and transform (Foucault 2004).

Pasiphaë is mostly overlooked in analysis of the labyrinth, and yet her role, as mother of the Minotaur and the birth as the impetus for building the labyrinth, is directly returned to by Danielewski. Similarly, Pelafina gives birth to Truant and also constructs him through her letters. In recognizing this, Truant's textual fear is also physical. While on occasion Pelafina is objected and passive (a book, a tree), she is also seen as responsible for marking Truant, both physically by her nails on his skin (his birth, through scarring his arms) and metaphorically by her writing (her tongue of ink). Truant suffers paralyzing horror through his encounters with text and ink, which in turn connote his mother. The textual layout, with its obscured and destroyed passages, represents the process of deconstruction as a threat to Truant. Chapter 9 makes explicit the labyrinth as text. From page 199 in particular, the reader moves through and back, inverting and turning the book to follow the various narratives.²⁰ The chapter reflects Danielewski's extensive research into labyrinths and charts Truant's increasing agoraphobia. In doing so, the labyrinth reflects both the novel's form and its content in a more explicit way than Carter's novel.

Horror erupts from within the home. Truant is physically scarred by his mother in the family home (burning oil, fingernails dug into his skin). To add to his mental scarring, she is then ripped from the family home and institutionalized (an event that Truant offers as possible inspiration for the Navidson labyrinth). In the kitchen of his home, where he was burnt and permanently

scarred, Truant replays the moment of trauma. The scars act both as a physical reminder of a traumatic historical event and of its ongoing effect as part of his present. The bodily scarring and the initially obscured origins of the trauma result in horror, as he is unable to emotionally interpret his marked body. His scars become speaking wounds. These scars are permanent but in a state of renewal.²¹ The scars take the shape of liquid in “whirls,” “eddies,” and “currents” and suggest a type of continuous movement away and toward the moment of their creation (p. 505). Truant’s engagement with them is recursive; he returns again and again to these traumatic marks on his body. Looking to his scars, Truant tells stories in order to protect both himself and others from the truth. “I’ve lost sense of what’s real and what’s not. What I’ve made up, what has made me” (p. 497). He later returns closer to the origin of the trauma as though tricked through the passageways in a labyrinth: “now I know exactly where I’m going, a place I’ve already managed to avoid twice” (p. 92). The story promises an elliptical return to an origin, both to his birth and also to his multiple scarrings as moments of trauma. Ultimately, the oil and the fingernail marks are recast as accidents, which enable Truant to reconsider his mother as nurturer rather than destroyer. Truant’s protective mechanism of inventing stories to hide his past and his research into Zampanò’s writing cause him to start to access the repressed memories of his mother. As he reads her letters and explores Zampanò’s manuscript, he traces “something else. Maybe parallel [...] certainly personal” (p. 502). Truant’s stories and memory are represented in architectural terms. They build the labyrinth. For Truant, the labyrinth represents the terrible mother, which is then transmuted into a more positive reclamation of femininity. As Danielewski confirms, “it was my aim to address that [fear]—but it’s also [a novel] about recovering from fear” (as cited in Cottrell 2000). Despite Danielewski’s complex engagement with representations of the labyrinth, ultimately for Truant, this is a return to the representation of the maternal body embodied by the text. Josh Toth emphasizes this recursive storying process as he claims, “it initiates a very sincere process of recovery that [...] knows that recovery can never be final or complete” (2013, p. 194). The confrontation of Pasiphaë and the Minotaur, Pelafina and Truant, is revealed as a reunion. Finally, their relationship is reimaged as a loving one.

CONCLUSION

These novels reimagine the classical Cretan labyrinth as a site of horror. Drawing on a form that Roland Barthes describes as notoriously rich in signification,²² the transformative confrontation with (or within) the labyrinth is revealed as a visceral re-encounter with the maternal body we lost at birth (Barthes 2010). The labyrinth is the physical manifestation of original horror caused by birth trauma and loss of the mother but also offers the means by which to recover. While the labyrinth has always been associated with transformation, in these novels, the reimaged maternal space has the ability to (re)absorb and so threatens the protagonists with existential nothingness. Perhaps

surprisingly, the experience of the labyrinth as a space of horror typically results in the potential for positive transformation.

In *The Passion of New Eve*, the labyrinth is explicitly bodily and transformative. The symbol survives the debunking of other mythical frameworks that inform psychoanalysis and closes the dichotomy between mind and body. In Evelyn's male state particularly, this confrontation is perceived in Kristevan terms of abjection and horror. Passage through the various labyrinths ultimately commutes the horror, and Eve(lyn) is transformed to signify the promise of the hermaphrodite. This hybrid figure is perhaps the only one that can dwell within the labyrinth and so makes the space *heimlich*.

In *House of Leaves*, the idea of the labyrinth representing maternal space and origin is continued and complicated. The primal horror, that the labyrinth represents maternal bodily space, is made complex as the labyrinth also reflects mother as house, book as mother, and house as book. The origins of trauma are recursively explored before offering a transformative outcome, "I know it's going to be okay," which suggests a release from horror (for now) (p. 515). In doing so, the labyrinth is both the locus of horror and the potential means to recover from familial horror. These texts anticipate the labyrinth in post-postmodern (or metamodernist)²³ literature, where horror is transmuted.²⁴

NOTES

1. See Cathy Gere in *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism* (2010) and Theodore Ziolkowski in *Minos and the Moderns: Cretan Myth in Twentieth-Century Literature and Art* (2008). With these archaeological discoveries, the myth of the labyrinth was revised as historical by Arthur Evans (see Ziolkowski 2008).
2. For James Joyce, escape from this labyrinth was possible but inaccessible. Franz Kafka's use of the labyrinth represented the overwhelming political and bureaucratic systems that entrapped the individual. Pablo Picasso's *Minotauremachie* series envisages a world where the walls of the labyrinth-prison are destroyed and the monstrous inhabitants of the labyrinth released.
3. In Umberto Eco's novel, the labyrinth variously represents a library and wider sign systems and is most closely associated with the mind rather than the womb. The subterranean labyrinths of Peter Ackroyd's novel are ritualistic; the space connects the blood sacrifice that consecrated their construction with a series of present-day murders.
4. I use the term "labyrinth" to mean a complex path typically expressed in architectural terms (Shields 1997).
5. The labyrinth symbol has been transported from initial Mediterranean cults through European migration (Matthews 1922).
6. I use the term *sf* to reflect recent genre concerns regarding the theorization of science fiction, science fantasy, and speculative fiction. See, for example, Sherryll Vint (2015). Carter's work contains elements of all of these genres and resists classification.
7. She brings the same scrutiny and mockery to bear on religious fervor, hyper-masculinity, and women's (willing) subjugation to men.

8. Perhaps the most obvious example of this is the reworking of the biblical narrative of Eve.
9. See, for example, the response to Carter's *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* (1978), which made it difficult to read her as a second wave feminist. Compare Patricia Duncker (1984) and Sarah Gamble's (1997) reading of her pornography or erotic agency. Sitting uneasily between second- and third-wave manifestations of feminism, her work is perhaps best understood within the emergent praxis of trans studies.
10. Carter refers to the character as Evelyn (his ambiguous birth name), as the primary male form, after the sex transformation and inadequate psychological programming, Evelyn becomes Eve. Though this differs from the novel, I have used the term "Eve/Evelyn" to represent the character at this point in the novel, as her identity is ambiguous. I have used the term "Eve(lyn)" to refer to the transformation of the pregnant character following her passage through the final labyrinth-cave.
11. Danielewski takes this a step further when Navidson claims to believe that his house (labyrinth) is god.
12. Mother has a counterpart in the monstrous male character, Zero. He is a circle (a zero), a negative, who, with an amputated half leg, resembles the truncated penis in the desert. These two god-heads are sustained by their female believers, their power "sustained by the force of [their] subjects' belief" (Gamble 1997, p. 72).
13. Experience of the gothic labyrinths of Matthew Lewis, Ann Radcliffe, and T.J. Matthias is one of terror when faced with excesses of ritual (Catholicism), political machinations, and a doubling of attraction and repulsion (Botting 2013). Trapped by the convulsions of the path he has walked, Matthew Lewis's Ambrosio cannot return to the surface (to redemption), even if he wished to (*The Monk* 1796).
14. Significantly, these critics have repeatedly returned to the book, as though it is a labyrinth they are unable to fully exit.
15. Despite this being a multimodal novel, there is no representation of the photograph of Delial. Its absence haunts the narrative. The description of the incident matches photographer Kevin Carter's Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph of 1993, of a young Sudanese girl stalked by a vulture. After Carter committed suicide in 1994, his father claimed "his son always carried around the horror of the work he did" (McCabe 2014).
16. See Bronwen Thomas on MZD message boards and online fan sites (Gibbons 2012a).
17. See Gibbons (2012a and especially 2011) for a consideration of the ways in which Truant's address to the reader ("you") plays with the boundaries of the text-world.
18. Pelafina's letters to Truant (published and extended in *The Whalestoe Letters*) appear in an appendix and provide an additional vantage point to reconsider the other narratives. As early as page 72, the editors direct the reader to Pelafina's letters to contextualize Truant's narrative. Close reading of Pelafina's letters reveals her knowledge of Zampanò: "zamp&no who did you lose?" (Danielewski, p. 615; in a coded letter).
19. Botting's exploration of horrorspace (2015) examines this aspect in particular.

20. Critics such as N. Katherine Hayles (2002a, b) and Slocombe (2005) explore this experimental layout in their work on Danielewski's novel.
21. The reference to "scars" is missing from the novel's lengthy index section (the term "scars" appears on pages 20, 48, 129, 411, and 505). Rather like J. G. Ballard's short story, "The Index," these absences point to a story.
22. Labyrinths are constructed through the lens of 5000 years of representation in art, architecture (Egyptian and Cretan examples), turf (Dalby, Rutland, UK), hedge (Hampton Court, UK; Palace of Versailles, France) and stone mazes (Scandinavia), and floor mosaics (Rheims, Chartres) and through 3000 years of literary examples (Kern 2000).
23. Critical consensus concerning contemporary literature (or after postmodernism) is currently being formulated. However, literature from the 1990s onward has typically been more concerned with trauma, ethics, a response to digital media, political and financial instability, and the environment, which privileges affect.
24. The labyrinth forms a reciprocal metaphor of the body and mind in Haruki Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* (2003) and David Mitchell's *The Bone Clocks* (2014). Both books end with the labyrinth as point of emergence where characters and narrative are transformed and made new.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ayrton, Michael. 1974. *The Seventh Jackson Knight Memorial Lecture: A Meaning to Maze*. Abingdon: Abbey Press.
- Barthes, Roland. 2010. *The Preparation of the Novel: Lecture Courses and Seminars at the Collège de France (1978–1979 and 1979–1980)*. Trans. Kate Briggs. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Botting, Fred. 2013. *The Gothic*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- . 2015. Horrorspace: Reading *House of Leaves*. *Horror Studies* 6 (2): 239–253.
- Carter, Angela. 1977. *The Passion of New Eve*. London: Virago.
- . 1983. Notes from the Front Line. In *On Gender and Writing*, ed. Michelene Wandor, 69–77. London: Pandora Press.
- Catto, Bonnie. 1988. The Labyrinth on the Cumae Gates and Aeneas' Escape from Troy. *Vergilius* 34: 71–76.
- Cavallaro, Dani. 2011. *The World of Angela Carter: A Critical Investigation*. Jefferson: McFarland.
- Cottrell, Sophie. 2000. A Conversation with Mark Z. Danielewski. *Bold Type* 3 (12).
- Cox, Katharine. 2006. 'What has made me?' Locating Mother in the Textual Labyrinth of Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*. *Critical Survey* 18 (2): 4–15.
- Danielewski, Mark Z. 2000. *House of Leaves*. New York: Random House.
- Dawson, Conor. 2015. There's Nothing So Black as the Inferno of the Human Mind: Infernal Phenomenal Reference and Trauma in Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*. *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 56 (3): 284–298.
- Duncker, Patricia. 1984. Re-Imagining the Fairy Tales: Angela Carter's Bloody Chambers. *Literature and History* 10: 3–11.
- Faris, Wendy B. 1988. *Labyrinths of Language: Symbolic Landscape and Narrative Design in Modern Fiction*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Filarete, Antonio Averlino detto il. 1972. *Trattato di architettura*. Ed. Anna Maria Finoli and Liliana Grassi. Milan: Edizione il Polifilo.

- Foucault, Michel. 2004. *Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel*. Trans. C. Ruas. London: Continuum.
- Gamble, Sarah. 1997. *Angela Carter: Writing from the Front Line*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Gere, Cathy. 2010. *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gibbons, Alison. 2011. This is not for You. In *Mark Z. Danielewski*, ed. Joe Bray and Alison Gibbons, 17–32. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- . 2012a. Multimodal Literature and Experimentation. In *Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature*, ed. Joe Bray, Alison Gibbons, and Brian McHale, 420–434. Abingdon: Routledge.
- . 2012b. *Multimodality, Cognition, and Experimental Literature*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Gibbs, Alan. 2014. *Contemporary American Trauma Narratives*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Gruss, Susanne. 2009. *The Pleasure of the Feminist Text: Reading Michele Roberts and Angela Carter*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Hayles, N. Katherine. 2002a. Saving the Subject: Remediation in *House of Leaves*. *American Literature* 71 (4): 779–806.
- . 2002b. *Writing Machines*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Hillis Miller, J. 1992. *Ariadne's Thread: Story Lines*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Karpinsky, Eva C. 2000. Signifying Passion: Angela Carter's Heroes and Villains as a Dystopian Romance. *Utopian Studies* 11 (2): 137–151.
- Kern, Hermann. 2000. *Through the Labyrinth: Designs and Meanings Over 5000 Years*. New York: Prestel.
- Kristeva, Julia. 1982. *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. L.S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Matthews, W.H. 1922. *Mazes and Labyrinths: A General Account of their History and Development*. London: Dover.
- McCabe, Eamonn. 2014. From the Archive, 30 July 1994: Photojournalist Kevin Carter Dies. *The Guardian*, 30 July. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2014/jul/30/kevin-carter-photojournalist-obituary-archive-1994>.
- Pope, Alexander. 1994. Essay on Man. In *Essay on Man and Other Poems*, 45–78. New York: Dover.
- Shields, Carol. 1997. *Larry's Party*. London: Fourth Estate.
- Slocombe, Will. 2005. 'This is not for You': Nihilism and the House that Jacques Built. *Modern Fiction Studies* 51 (1): 88–109.
- Toth, Josh. 2013. Healing Postmodern America: Plasticity and Renewal in Danielewski's *House of Leaves*. *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 54 (2): 181–197.
- Vint, Sherryl. 2015. Ab-realism: Fractal Language and Social Change. In *China Miéville: Critical Essays (Contemporary Writers: Critical Essays No. 3)*, ed. Caroline Edwards and Tony Venezia, 39–59. Canterbury: Gylphi.
- Welby, Lizzy. 2014. Abjected Landscapes: Crossing Psychogenic Borders in Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*. *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 47 (1): 73–87.
- Wilson, Elizabeth. 1992. *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Ziolkowski, Theodore. 2008. *Minos and the Moderns: Cretan Myth in Twentieth-Century Literature and Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

PART III

Approaches to Literary Horror



Evolutionary Study of Horror Literature

Mathias Clasen

Evolutionary literary theory has in recent years grown from a small movement at the periphery of the literary establishment to a much more visible and productive school (Carroll 2018). While most evolutionary literary theorists focus on canonical literature,¹ some scholars have begun to approach popular literary genres such as horror from an evolutionary perspective (Vanderbeke and Cooke *in press*). An evolutionary approach to literature entails a commitment to evolutionary psychology, which posits that the human mind evolved in an adaptive relationship to its environment over millions of years. In contrast to blank-slate psychologies, which claim that human minds have no innate structure, evolutionary psychologists suggest human minds are richly structured “in advance of experience” (Pinker 2002; Haidt 2012, p. 131). Humans universally have motives and dispositions that evolved in response to adaptive challenges. Such motives and dispositions give rise to culture. Thus, to understand culture, including literature and its oral antecedents, one must understand the minds that produce culture (Carroll 2013). Evolutionary literary theorists are interested in the evolved psychological mechanisms that underpin imagination and storytelling practices and in the adaptive functions of such practices. Evolutionary horror scholars, specifically, claim that we can understand horror fiction as a cultural technology that works by tapping into ancient, defensive psychological mechanisms to satisfy an adaptive appetite for vicarious experience with scenarios of danger. Moreover, they claim that evolutionary interpretative practice gains epistemological strength from being integrated with the evolutionary social sciences (Clasen 2017b). Evolutionary horror study is still an emerging enterprise, however, and much theoretical and interpretative work remains to be done.

M. Clasen (✉)
Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark

EVOLUTIONARY HORROR STUDY: A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The first scholar to do a sustained analysis of horror fiction from a theoretical position informed by evolutionary thinking was H. P. Lovecraft. In his long essay, *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (written 1925–1927 and revised 1933–1934), Lovecraft famously claimed that the “oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown ... As may naturally be expected of a form so closely connected with primal emotion, the horror-tale is as old as human thought and speech themselves” (2000, p. 23). Lovecraft thus suggested a causal link between human nature and horror stories. Many of Lovecraft’s key claims about the evolved underpinnings of horror have since been vindicated by scientific research (Clasen 2018). However, rather than giving rise to a dynamic research paradigm on horror and human nature, Lovecraft’s essay languished for much of the twentieth century and had little impact on subsequent horror study. When academic horror study became institutionally established during the 1980s, most academics with an interest in horror operated within constructivist paradigms that disregarded biological reality or adopted psychoanalytical ideas disconnected from psychological reality (Clasen 2017b). Even as evolutionary theory was transforming social science and as the empirical evidence against blank-slate thinking and orthodox psychoanalysis accumulated, few humanist scholars—let alone horror scholars—heeded these developments. A few isolated, evolutionarily informed publications on horror literature and film emerged in the new millennium, including work by Torben Grodal, Benson Saler and Charles A. Ziegler, David Swanger, Robert King, Stephen A. Asma, and the present author.² The evolutionary approach to horror literature is not very widespread yet, but scholars are making advances in charting the evolved underpinnings and adaptive functions of horror literature and in developing an evolutionary interpretative paradigm for horror study.

HORROR AND NEGATIVE EMOTION

Evolutionary horror scholars focus, as a first step, on the emotions targeted by horror, and they explain those emotions as a result of biological evolution. As many scholars have observed, horror is affectively defined, that is, by its intended reader reaction.³ That intended reader reaction encompasses negative emotional responses. Horror is meant to frighten and disturb its audience; it promises to elicit negative emotions—fear, terror, dread, anxiety, disgust—in its readership. Thus, horror is often marketed on its ability to disturb readers. When Stephen King said of Paul Tremblay’s 2015 possession novel *Head Full of Ghosts* that it “scared the living hell” out of him (“and I’m pretty hard to scare”), Tremblay’s publishers printed that paradoxical approbation on the cover of the next edition, and sales soared. Horror literature typically achieves its affective aim by depicting relatable characters clashing with antagonistic

forces. Through perspective-taking and, more often than not, sympathetic identification with these characters, the reader mirrors their horror at being preyed on by supercharged predators—from werewolves to wendigos—or immaterial, morally polarized forces such as the evil ghosts that populate the Overlook Hotel in King's *The Shining* (Clasen 2017a). We respond emotionally to such depictions because they tap into our evolved fear system.

The negative emotions prototypically evoked by and depicted in horror stories are phenomenologically distinct but functionally united. They feel slightly different, but all evolved to protect the organism from harm. Disgust protects us from pathogens; fear protects us from assault; anxiety, terror, and dread ready us for confrontation with remote or abstract threats. Negative emotions have their wellspring in an ancient mammalian fear system, and once activated they are difficult to consciously extinguish (Öhman and Mineka 2001). The fear system is adaptively biased to err on the side of caution. Humans, like other mammals, evolved to react strongly to even ambiguous cues of danger—a rustling in the leaves, say, or a noise in the dead of night. This bias is adaptive because a false negative is much more costly than a false positive. If we react with fear to a strange noise that turns out to be floorboards settling, we will have lost little. If, conversely, we fail to react to a strange noise that turns out to signal impending assault, we may lose everything (Marks and Nesse 1994). This design characteristic helps explain why humans scare easily—so easily, in fact, that even holding in one's imagination a particularly vivid representation of danger produces a range of downstream physiological effects such as elevated heart rate, goosebumps, and perspiration.

Horror literature can exploit the whole range of negative emotion. Fear and anxiety are probably the most commonly targeted emotions in horror, but many stories also aim to elicit visceral disgust through the depiction of body-envelope violations or moral disgust through the depiction of sadistic, antisocial violence toward protagonists. Jack Ketchum's *The Girl Next Door*, for example, powerfully elicits moral disgust through the depiction of a deranged suburban family's murderous abuse of an innocent girl. Some writers depict conceptually disturbing material and aim at eliciting terror, such as the response ideally produced by a Lovecraft or a Thomas Ligotti story—a terror elicited not so much through the depiction of sympathetic characters in peril or the depiction of fearsome monsters, but through a suggestion of a fundamentally hostile or meaningless cosmos. Dread, while related to terror and anxiety, is elicited by stories that suggest the ominous presence of some vaguely defined or dimly understood yet massive evil (Freeland 2004). Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, through its elusive suggestion of a malicious supernatural force working insidiously on a highly unstable narrator, aims to elicit dread. All these various emotional responses have their roots in the evolved fear system. Thus, an understanding of the structure of this system, and of the evolutionary forces that shaped it, helps scholars make sense of how and why horror literature can so powerfully move us. Horror stories invite us to participate imaginatively in virtual worlds that teem with danger. That danger often takes the form of monsters.

HORROR AND MONSTERS

Horror stories tend to be structured around monsters, and most such monsters reflect ancestral dangers (Carroll 1990). By monsters, I mean dangerous, evil, more or less unnatural agents. Pennywise the Dancing Clown from Stephen King's *It* is evil, dangerous, and unnatural in its ability to violate the laws of physics (Clasen 2014). The suburban monsters in Ketchum's *The Girl Next Door* are not unnatural, but they are dangerous and evil in their psychotic disregard for others' suffering and in the sadistic pleasure they take in degradation and torture. Horror monsters have qualities that allow them to exploit the human fear system. We evolved to be particularly attentive to certain kinds of danger, including the danger posed by predators and hostile conspecifics (Coss and Goldthwaite 1995; Barrett 2005). Many horror monsters are exaggerations of ancestral predators, that is, supercharged variations of the kinds of alpha predators that have preyed on humans and our hominin ancestors for millions of years (Clasen 2010; Asma 2015). That is why a dramatic depiction of a vengeful shark is much more imaginatively and emotionally compelling than a dramatic depiction of a vengeful cow, even though more people are killed globally by cows than sharks. Horror monsters need not be realistic to command attention, but they do need to tap into evolved attentional biases. A toothy, fast-moving shark is a closer fit with ancestral fears than is a lumbering, brown-eyed cow. As Saler and Ziegler observe, "since monsters, in one form or another, were an omnipresent feature of our evolutionary past, tales about slaying monsters ... have a salience and relevance for us that represent a heritage from our Paleolithic ancestors" (2005, p. 224).

Unnatural monsters achieve particular salience and enjoy superior mnemonic resilience because they violate innate intuitions (Grodal 2009). An angry ghost is more memorable and eye-catching than an angry person. Humans evolved a cognitive system that automatically and non-reflectively categorizes objects in the world and assigns to the objects certain domain-specific assumptions. When an object appears to violate those domain-specific assumptions—if a rock floats, a tree speaks, or a person passes through walls—we pay particular attention (Boyer 2001). Unnatural, category-violating horror monsters take advantage of this aspect of human cognition. They combine traits from, or violate expectations of, distinct ontological categories. Other traits, typically traits that facilitate predation, may be amplified to make the monsters more fearsome, that is, to more effectively activate the evolved fear system.

The evil of most horror monsters is likewise explicable in evolutionary terms. Insofar as horror monsters are ascribed intelligible motives, they tend to be antisocial ones (Clasen 2014; Kjeldgaard-Christiansen 2016). Some horror monsters, such as most zombies, seem to be driven purely by predatory hunger and can hardly be characterized as evil, whereas others—the truly evil ones—are driven by a sadistic desire to inflict harm on others. Count Dracula is evil because he is clearly unconcerned about the suffering that he inflicts on his victims in his selfish pursuit of power (Clasen 2012a). He sustains himself on the dehuman-

ization and degradation of others. Antisociality tends to be seen as evil because humans evolved to suppress behaviors that undermine sociality. This tendency evolved in response to the challenge of sustaining cooperative, cohesive groups. Stories play a vital role in transmitting and reinforcing prosocial norms (Gottschall 2012). Most literature—including horror literature—privileges prosociality over antisociality, which is particularly evident in agonistic structure, that is, the distribution of characters along a continuum ranging from negative (antagonists) to positive (protagonists). Antagonists tend to be represented as selfish, antisocial, power-hungry individuals, whereas protagonists tend to be represented as prosocial, helpful, unselfish individuals (Carroll et al. 2012). Jonathan Harker's attempt to save his fiancée and the world from the evil of Dracula in Bram Stoker's 1897 novel is unselfish and good. Jack Torrance's selfish and murderous pursuit of power and prestige in Stephen King's *The Shining* (1977) is bad (Clasen 2017a). Consider also, as an atypical yet illustrative case, one of the most famous literary monsters of all time, Frankenstein's creature from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1831). The notoriously ambivalent monster is motivated not by selfish gain or sadistic pleasure, but by a prosocial desire to enter into cooperative alliances and to form procreative bonds. As he says, "I desired love and fellowship" (Shelley 1994, p. 165). His monstrosity lies not in his motives, but in his appearance—as he says, "the unnatural hideousness of my person was the chief object of horror with those who ... beheld me" (p. 94). This peculiar and dissonant combination of exterior and interior qualities produces an aesthetically complex and interesting monster, one that illustrates the importance of motivation to the concept of monstrosity.

The structure of horror monsters, then, is explicable in terms of evolved cognitive tendencies. They are typically dangerous, antisocial creatures that mobilize our fear and condemnation, and they tend to be exaggerated or counterintuitive variations on ancestral threats to more effectively engage our interest and provoke strong emotional responses. This is a key claim in evolutionary horror study—an insight that could not have been reached without an understanding of human evolutionary history and the ancestral selection pressures that shaped the human mind.

THE PLEASURES AND FUNCTIONS OF HORROR

The primary function of horror literature, according to evolutionary theorists, is to provide an imaginative setting for vicarious experience with threat scenarios. Such experience is inherently rewarding because it serves the adaptive functions of emotional and cognitive calibration. There is a functional parallel to children's play activities, such as hide-and-seek and chase play, which afford vicarious experience with scenarios of hunting and predation and are likewise inherently rewarding (Steen and Owens 2001; Grodal 2009). When we enter imaginatively into fictional horror worlds and respond emotionally and cognitively to the events depicted and to the characters' responses to these events,

we gain vicarious experience with negative emotion at high levels of intensity, and we develop coping strategies for handling such emotions. All of this may serve important adaptive functions. In Stephen Asma's words:

We use the imagination in order to establish and guide our own agency in chaotic and uncontrollable situations. The horror story is probably a permanent player in the moral imagination because human vulnerability is permanent. The monster is a beneficial foe, helping us to virtually represent the obstacles that real life will surely send our way. As long as there are real enemies in the world, there will be useful dramatic versions of them in our heads. (2015, p. 954)

More than providing the pleasure of emotional stimulation and vicarious experience with danger, the best horror stories provide psychological and sociological insight and help calibrate our moral systems. Such stories give us access to the thoughts of fictional people as they respond to evil monsters or to the destruction of their worlds, and they give us access to (typically dark) nuances of social interaction. Take Stephen King's "The Mist" (1980) as an example. In this story, a strange mist descends on a small town. A group of people converge on a supermarket to seek refuge from the monsters hiding in the mist. Soon, however, deadly violence breaks out among the refugees who assemble into antagonistic groups and start fighting one another. This story is more about psychological and social responses to disaster than it is about supernatural monsters, and embedded in the story is a moral vision of how one ought to act in the face of such disaster. The best horror stories tend to be psychologically realistic, no matter how outlandish their monsters, which enables them to function as "instruments of subjective orientation—orientation in attitudes, emotional responses, values, and beliefs," in Joseph Carroll's words (2006, p. 43). Horror stories can tap into an evolved motive for imaginative absorption and thus help us make sense of the world and of the behavioral options available to us, particularly in scenarios of danger or existential crisis. As another example, consider Richard Matheson's story about a vampire apocalypse, *I Am Legend* (1954). Here, we follow the sole survivor of a vampire pandemic in his attempts to survive predation by the vampires, and more pertinently, in his attempts to make sense of a radically altered world and his own position in it. The narrative premise of the story is implausible, but the existential predicament depicted in it is not, and a responsive reader comes away from the novel with a rich and potentially instructive experience (Clasen 2017b). Horror thus helps us calibrate our values and sift through the limitless range of behavioral options uniquely available to big-brained humans.

Humans evolved to find pleasure in vicarious and aesthetically modulated experience, and horror literature provides such experience. Horror stories are about evil and the fragility of life, about human interactions and social dynamics, and they can pose philosophical questions about the fabric and nature of reality in an engaging way. They frequently invoke monsters and morally charged supernatural forces—partly for the inherent (and evolutionarily explicable) fascination of such themes, but more pertinently as catalysts for essentially human

dramas. That is how horror stories come to function as “instruments in subjective orientation,” in Carroll’s phrase; and as “one of the vital ways in which we try to make sense of our lives, and the often terrible world we see around us,” in Stephen King’s (Carroll 2006, p. 43; King 2010, p. 365).

CONCLUSION

Horror literature has been studied from a vast range of perspectives since the inception of academic horror study (Hogle and Smith 2009). Only recently have theorists begun applying evolutionary and cognitive psychology to the genre. An evolutionary perspective on horror converges with a commonsensical understanding that horror works by stimulating deep-seated emotions, but the evolutionary perspective lets us get into focus the causal mechanisms that underpin the functions and effects of horror. Only by understanding the evolved structure of the mind can we begin to understand how and why horror works, why horror literature tends to circle around few and evolutionarily relevant themes, and why certain monsters (such as giant sharks and murderous clowns) are consistently perceived as scary while others (such as cows) are not. The stories that captivate and frighten us fall within an extremely narrow subset of all logically possible stories—that subset, the possibility space of horror, is constrained by human nature. Hence, according to evolutionary theorists, an understanding of human nature, and the evolutionary process that gave rise to it, is indispensable to a comprehensive, scientifically consistent understanding of horror literature (Clasen 2017b).

NOTES

1. Brian Boyd, *On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition, and Fiction* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009); Joseph Carroll, *Literary Darwinism: Evolution, Human Nature, and Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Joseph Carroll et al., *Graphing Jane Austen: The Evolutionary Basis of Literary Meaning*, Cognitive Studies in Literature and Performance (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), elektronisk materiale; Jonathan Gottschall, *The Rape of Troy: Evolution, Violence, and the World of Homer* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
2. Torben Kragh Grodal, *Embodied Visions: Evolution, Emotion, Culture, and Film* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Benson Saler and Charles A. Ziegler, “Dracula and Carmilla: Monsters and the Mind,” *Philosophy and Literature* 29, no. 1 (2005); David Swanger, “Shock and Awe: The Emotional Roots of Compound Genres,” *New York Review of Science Fiction* 20, no. 5 (2008); Robert King, “A Regiment of Monstrous Women: Female Horror Archetypes and Life History Theory,” *Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences* 9, no. 3 (2015); Stephen T. Asma, “Monsters on the Brain: An Evolutionary Epistemology of Horror,” *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 81, no. 4 (2015); Mathias Clasen, “Monsters Evolve: A Biocultural Approach to Horror Stories,” *Review of General Psychology* 16, no. 2 (2012); “Terrifying Monsters, Malevolent

- Ghosts, and Evolved Danger-Management Architecture: A Consilient Approach to Horror Fiction,” in *Darwin’s Bridge: Uniting the Humanities and Sciences*, ed. Joseph Carroll, Dan P. McAdams, and E. O. Wilson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); *Why Horror Seduces*.
3. Douglas E. Winter, “Introduction,” in *Prime Evil: New Stories by the Masters of Modern Horror*, ed. Douglas E. Winter (New York: New American Library, 1988); Xavier Aldana Reyes, “Introduction: What, Why, and When Is Horror Fiction?,” in *Horror: A Literary History*, ed. Xavier Aldana Reyes (London: The British Library, 2016), 16.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aldana Reyes, Xavier. 2016. Introduction: What, Why, and When Is Horror Fiction? In *Horror: A Literary History*, ed. Xavier Aldana Reyes, 7–17. London: The British Library.
- Asma, Stephen T. 2015. Monsters on the Brain: An Evolutionary Epistemology of Horror. *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 81 (4): 941–968.
- Barrett, H. Clark. 2005. Adaptations to Predators and Prey. In *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, ed. David M. Buss, 200–223. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Boyd, Brian. 2009. *On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition, and Fiction*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Boyer, Pascal. 2001. *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought*. New York: Basic Books.
- Carroll, Noël. 1990. *The Philosophy of Horror, or, Paradoxes of the Heart*. New York: Routledge.
- Carroll, Joseph. 2004. *Literary Darwinism: Evolution, Human Nature, and Literature*. New York: Routledge.
- . 2006. The Human Revolution and the Adaptive Function of Literature. *Philosophy and Literature* 30 (1): 33–49.
- . 2013. A Rationale for Evolutionary Studies of Literature. *Scientific Study of Literature* 3 (1): 8–15.
- . 2018. Evolutionary Literary Theory. In *Blackwell Companion to Literary Theory*, ed. David Richter. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Carroll, Joseph, Jonathan Gottschall, John A. Johnson, and Daniel J. Kruger. 2012. *Graphing Jane Austen: The Evolutionary Basis of Literary Meaning*, Cognitive Studies in Literature and Performance. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. elektronisk materiale.
- Clasen, Mathias. 2010. The Horror! The Horror! *The Evolutionary Review* 1 (1): 112–119.
- . 2012a. Attention, Predation, Counterintuition: Why Dracula Won’t Die. *Style* 46 (3): 378–398.
- . 2012b. Monsters Evolve: A Biocultural Approach to Horror Stories. *Review of General Psychology* 16 (2): 222–229.
- . 2014. Evil Monsters in Horror Fiction: An Evolutionary Perspective on Form and Function. In *A History of Evil in Popular Culture: What Hannibal Lecter, Stephen King, and Vampires Reveal About America*, ed. Sharon Packer and Jody Pennington, 39–47. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.
- . 2016. Terrifying Monsters, Malevolent Ghosts, and Evolved Danger-Management Architecture: A Consilient Approach to Horror Fiction. In *Darwin’s*

- Bridge: Uniting the Humanities and Sciences*, ed. Joseph Carroll, Dan P. McAdams, and E.O. Wilson, 183–193. New York: Oxford University Press.
- . 2017a. Hauntings of Human Nature: An Evolutionary Critique of King's *The Shining*. *Style* 51 (1): 76–88.
- . 2017b. *Why Horror Seduces*, 2017. New York: Oxford University Press.
- . 2018. The Evolution of Horror: A Neo-Lovecraftian Poetics. In *New Directions in Supernatural Horror Literature: The Critical Influence of H.P. Lovecraft*, ed. Sean Moreland. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Coss, Richard G., and R.O. Goldthwaite. 1995. The Persistence of Old Designs for Perception. In *Perspectives in Ethology 11: Behavioral Design*, ed. N.S. Thompson, 83–148. New York: Plenum Press.
- Freeland, Cynthia A. 2004. Horror and Art-Dread. In *The Horror Film*, ed. Stephen Prince, 189–205. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Gottschall, Jonathan. 2008. *The Rape of Troy: Evolution, Violence, and the World of Homer*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2012. *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Grodal, Torben Kragh. 2009. *Embodied Visions: Evolution, Emotion, Culture, and Film*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Haidt, Jonathan. 2012. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion*. New York: Random House Inc.
- Hogle, Jerrold E., and Andrew Smith. 2009. Revisiting the Gothic and Theory: An Introduction. *Gothic Studies* 11 (1): 1–8.
- King, Stephen. 2010. Afterword. In *Full Dark, No Stars*, 365–368. New York: Gallery Books.
- King, Robert. 2015. A Regiment of Monstrous Women: Female Horror Archetypes and Life History Theory. *Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences* 9 (3): 170–185.
- Kjeldgaard-Christiansen, Jens. 2016. Evil Origins: A Darwinian Genealogy of the Popcultural Villain. *Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences* 10 (2): 109–122.
- Lovecraft, H.P. 2000. *The Annotated Supernatural Horror in Literature*. New York: Hippocampus Press.
- Marks, Isaac M., and Randolph M. Nesse. 1994. Fear and Fitness: An Evolutionary Analysis of Anxiety Disorders. *Ethology and Sociobiology* 15 (5–6): 247–261.
- Öhman, Arne, and Susan Mineka. 2001. Fears, Phobias, and Preparedness: Toward an Evolved Module of Fear and Fear Learning. *Psychological Review* 108 (3): 483–522.
- Pinker, Steven. 2002. *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature*. New York: Viking.
- Saler, Benson, and Charles A. Ziegler. 2005. Dracula and Carmilla: Monsters and the Mind. *Philosophy and Literature* 29 (1): 218–227.
- Shelley, Mary. 1994. *Frankenstein*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc.
- Steen, Francis F., and Stephanie A. Owens. 2001. Evolution's Pedagogy: An Adaptationist Model of Pretense and Entertainment. *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 1 (4): 289–321.
- Swanger, David. 2008. Shock and Awe: The Emotional Roots of Compound Genres. *New York Review of Science Fiction* 20 (5): 1, 8–1, 18.
- Vanderbeke, Dirk, and Brett Cooke, eds. In press. *Don't We All Like It?: Popular Literature and Culture under an Evolutionary Lens*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Winter, Douglas E. 1988. Introduction. In *Prime Evil: New Stories by the Masters of Modern Horror*, ed. Douglas E. Winter, 11–21. New York: New American Library.



Transgressive Horror and Politics: The Splatsterpunks and Extreme Horror

Aalya Ahmad

Transgressive and extreme horror are broad terms, referring to the tendency in certain works of horror fiction toward prolonged and graphic representations of body horror, torture, mutilation, abjection, and violence—subjects classified as deviant according to cultural norms—and the depiction of acts that shatter social and cultural taboos, causing reactions of shock and revulsion. Unsurprisingly, works of transgressive horror (and occasionally their authors) have often incurred fierce denunciations, social sanctions such as censorship, and accusations of shoddiness and tastelessness. Transgressive horror, in its very excesses, may expose the cultural distinctions governing taste itself; what is acceptable to show and not show; what constitutes abnormality and Otherness and can powerfully expose and unsettle the normativity of dominant institutions and systems, thereby functioning as a form of oppositional politics. While it tends to be unfavorably contrasted with the subtler scares of “quiet horror,” current cultural production indicates that the power of extreme horror, whether deemed tasteless or not, shows little sign of diminishing.

Transgressive horror does not fall neatly into categories. Rather, it seems to call for portmanteau terminology: Philip Brophy’s “horrality—horror, textuality, morality, hilarity,” Isabel Cristina Pinedo’s “carnography,” (1997), John McCarty’s “splatstick,” “gorno,” and “zomedy” (zombie-comedy), to name but a few (Brophy 2000, p. 277). However, before any of these categories were conceived, David Schow coined the term “splatsterpunk” at the World Fantasy Convention in 1986, and the term subsequently caught on among many writ-

A. Ahmad (✉)
Carleton University, Gatineau, QC, Canada

ers in the field as “emergent horror fiction pushing the limits of gore and sex to excess. It features frequent and graphic descriptions of grisly violence, bloody deaths, and extreme sex, built on the aesthetics of slasher movies, punk rock, and video pornography” and linked with “urban horror, post-industrial decay and a confrontational, ‘in-your-face aesthetic” (Joshi 2006, p. 607). One notable example of Schow’s work, “Jerry’s Kids Meet Wormboy, (1989)” is replete with cartoonish ultra-violence and messily exploding, putrescent zombies, giving the reader little time to recover from one gross-out scene to the next.

Indeed, the relentless pace of much extreme horror fiction shows the contemporary permeation of a filmic narrative sensibility into written texts, a tendency to blur the boundaries between media that has only become more pronounced since the 1980s. Prominent horror editor Ellen Datlow remarks of splatterpunk that “one of the apparent misconceptions of the splatterpunk writers is that describing the infliction of pain or the throes of death makes their stories realistic. All it does, actually, is demonstrate that they’ve been seeing too many movies” (Datlow and Windling 1996, p. xviii). The filmic counterpart of such writing has been disparagingly named as “torture porn,” a term coined by *Village Voice* critic David Edelstein, who links the emergence of graphic horror films, such as *The Devil’s Rejects* (2005), *Saw* (2004), and *Hostel* (2005), with the shocking revelations of tortures perpetrated by American soldiers in Iraq post-9/11 (Edelstein 2006).

Authors of transgressive horror fiction include Clive Barker (*Books of Blood*), Jack Ketchum, Joe Lansdale, Poppy Z. Brite/Billy Martin, J. F. Gonzalez, Matt Shaw, Edward Lee, and Richard Laymon, who have all (with the possible exception of Barker) been relegated squarely to the realm of subcultural popular horror fiction. In fact, any consideration of transgressive horror entails an examination of the social distinctions made between high and low cultures. Authors and editors John Skipp and Craig Spector insist that the distance “is simply a matter of breeding and income bracket” (Golden 1992, p. 244). Reading through the discursive intersections and shifts between “high culture” and “popular culture,” between literature and horror, and between “classic” and “extreme” horror may be fruitful within changing socio-cultural contexts. As Robin Wood puts it, the “seemingly innocuous” texts associated with generic horror “can be far more radical and fundamentally undermining than works of conscious social criticism” because, in Wood’s view, the framing of a horror text as “just entertainment” allows for the relaxation of the psychological “censor” which governs deep-seated ideological beliefs (Britton et al. 1979, p. 13).¹

Splatterpunk’s co-ascendancy with the rise of Ronald Reagan and the religious right in the United States during the 1980s underscores the subversive intent of much of its excesses, often directly aimed, as in “Jerry’s Kids Meet Wormboy,” at authoritarians and religious hypocrites. Splatterpunk also goes hand in hand with the iconic monster of the apocalyptic millennium and the globalized post-capitalist, twenty-first century, the flesh-eating, abjectly living-dead zombie, a figure derived from the zombie films of George Romero, which

are celebrated by critics such as Wood for their radical, “apocalyptic” quality. While more attention of late has been paid to zombie films, less has been accorded to the proliferation of written zombie narratives, many of which are overt satires of consumer capitalism. In “Dead Giveaway,” for example, Brian Hodge imagines the aftermath of a zombie apocalypse as an audience of zombies who “still want to be entertained” filling a television studio where a harried, enslaved character named “Monty Olson” hosts a game show similar to *Let’s Make a Deal*, in which his fellow-survivors are captured, caged, and then offered up as prizes for the zombies behind Doors Number One, Two, and Three. The audience reaction is as grimly comical as the scenes of zombies wandering the shopping mall in Romero’s *Dawn of the Dead* (1979):

They sat politely, somewhere around a thousand of them, somewhere around two thousand unblinking eyes staring back at him. Some of them clapped, or tried their best, clumsy hands slapping together like pairs of gutted fish. Others cheered, sounding like contented cattle lowing gently into the night. A sea of gray faces, agate eyes. (Hodge 1989, p. 348)

Drawing parallels between blissed-out consumers sitting slack-jawed in front of their bloody entertainments and the zombie is quite obvious, and, of course, the contemporary zombie narrative is far more about us than it is about zombies. Ethics are severely tried and tested through the excesses of apocalyptic zombie fictions; most of the horror of these fictions resides in their revelation that the majority of people will fail dismally at retaining the moral qualities associated with “humanity” under extreme conditions.

In other zombie stories, religion as well as television serves as the opiate of the zombie masses. It is no coincidence that some of the most splatter-filled stories appearing in John Skipp and Craig Spector’s landmark Romero-inspired collection *Book of the Dead* (1989), which contains the aforementioned “Jerry’s Kids Meet Wormboy” and “Dead Giveaway,” also include Joe Lansdale’s “On the Far Side of the Cadillac Desert with Dead Folks,” Nina Kiriki Hoffmann’s “Zombies for Jesus,” and Les Daniels’s “The Good Parts.” All these stories feature greedy televangelists, lustful preachers, and other flawed patriarchs encountering hordes of ravening zombies in the context of issues near and dear to the “Moral Majority,” such as pornography and abortion. “Jerry’s Kids Meet Wormboy,” for example, is set in a zombie-ravaged post-apocalyptic cemetery where Wormboy, an obese and cannibalistic social outcast and unlikely hero, battles an army of “born-again,” tame zombies led by tent preacher Reverend Jerry, who has managed to suppress their flesh-eating proclivities with the help of rattlesnake venom, culminating in an unholy mess:

Jerry felt something skin past his ear at two hundred per. Behind him, another of the born-again came unglued, skull and eyes and brains all cartwheeling off on different trajectories. Jerry stepped blind and his heel skidded through something moist and slick; his feet took to the air and his rump introduced itself to the pave-

ment and much, much more of Deacon Fatty. More colors soaked into his coat of many. The Right Reverend Jerry involuntarily took his Lord's name in vain.... It took no time for the air to clog with the tang of blackened geek beef. One whiff was all it took to make Wormboy ralph long and strenuously into the moat. Steaming puke pasted a geek who lay skewered through the back, facing the sky, mouth agape. It spasmed and twisted on the barbs, trying to lap up as much fresh hot barf as it could collect. (Skipt and Spector 1989, pp. 372–3)

Resplendent with “body horror,” splatterpunk thus employs Brophy’s “horlarity” and Julia Kristeva’s concept of abjection accompanied by “apocalyptic laughter” (Williams 1991; Kristeva 1982, p. 204). As such, it has drawn accusations of tastelessness and shoddy craftsmanship from others in the field. For example, Karl Edward Wagner laments, “the growing trend in horror writing simply to introduce a few faceless expendables and rush them to a grisly end—the grislier the better” (Wagner 1990, p. 14). Similarly, Elizabeth and Thomas F. Monteleone deplore the “steaming organs school of writing” and, while Joe R. Lansdale defends splatterpunk by finding many instances of it in the Bible, he simultaneously denounces the “evisceration extravaganza” (Monteleone 1995; Golden 1992, pp. 143–47). Robert Bloch condemns the trend toward “more ketchup on our people-burgers” while Ramsey Campbell distinguishes “mindless escalation” and “coarsening” from the “legitimately” “appalling,” writing that “too much of today’s horror fiction; whether or not they ‘used to strive for awe and achieve fear,’ [quoting David Aylward], certainly now they strive for fear and achieve only disgust” (Bloch 1991, p. xvi; Golden 1992, pp. 73, 74). Ellen Datlow is critical of gendered violence in transgressive horror, writing, “what is being called ‘splatterpunk’ is for the most part violent, brutal, ugly fiction treating women as victims” (Datlow and Windling 1996, p. xli).²

On the other hand, in *Danse Macabre*, his study of the horror genre, Stephen King wrote that horror exists on three levels, the highest being terror (the evocation of fear in the mind of the reader), the second highest being horror (the depiction of something physically wrong), and the lowest operating at the level of revulsion. For King, contra the horror authors and critics who view the evocation of disgust as unacceptably low, all three levels are fair game: “If I find I cannot horrify, I’ll go for the gross-out. I’m not proud” (King 1981, p. 37). Splatterpunk’s fixed focus on the low signifies a slipperiness, not only of guts but of genre, as it violently rejects “tasteful” elisions, opting instead to “go for the gross-out” rather than aim for a “higher” type of affect.

S. T. Joshi thoughtfully observes, “It always puzzles me how the splatterpunks—and [Clive] Barker as well—can imagine that the mere harm that can be inflicted upon the human body is the culmination of horror or weirdness” (Joshi 2004, p. 191). But, rather than fixating on the low status of “mere sensation,” Joshi suggests that “splatterpunk, if it is anything, is not so much a subgenre—much less a world view—as a mode of writing which all sorts of writers can employ when it suits their purposes” (p. 193). Karl Edward Wagner

also notes the needless “fragmentation” between advocates of “quiet horror” (dark fantasy) and splatterpunk fans: “Because a story is dead boring dull, it is not necessarily literary horror. Writing about a Roto-Rooter rapist does not necessarily push back the frontiers of horror’s future” (Wagner 1990, p. 15). Splatterpunk has indeed relied on somewhat of an arbitrary distinction between styles in the production of horror fiction, including attempts to demarcate “New Gothic” (mode) versus “horror” (genre) (Hutchings 1996, p. 89).

For the purposes of a discussion of affect in written horror, however, the debate is not about “splatter” versus “quiet horror,” so much as it is between showing and not-showing, telling and not-telling. If we read, for example, Arthur Conan Doyle’s classic occult tale, “The Leather Funnel,” we soon come across a dreadful scene of “torture porn”: the narrator sleeps at the house of his friend Dacre with the titular object under his pillow for the purpose of inducing a dream about the funnel’s origins. Obliging, he dreams of a room where a young, attractive woman is undergoing a trial and sentencing. She is then taken to a torture chamber “not unlike a modern gymnasium” and strapped down while the narrator describes his emotions:

My heart sank within me as I saw these ominous preparations, and yet I was held by the fascination of horror, and I could not take my eyes from the strange spectacle. A man had entered the room with a bucket of water in either hand. Another followed with a third bucket.... The second man had a wooden dipper—a bowl with a straight handle—in his other hand. This he gave to the man in black. At the same moment one of the varlets approached with a dark object in his hand, which even in my dream filled me with a vague feeling of familiarity. It was a leathern filler. With horrible energy he thrust it—but I could stand no more. (Doyle 1989, p. 159)

Our narrator simply cannot go on to describe the torture in the dream and struggles awake with a shriek. Like Hitchcock’s *Psycho*, however, enough has been shown to engage the reader’s imagination. The horror is not diminished: indeed, the proponents of “quiet horror” would argue, it is actually heightened by being proairetically left up to readers to imagine for themselves where that funnel was thrust and what ensued, although more hints of body horror and the extremity of the torture are offered at the story’s conclusion via the narrator’s discovery of ragged bite marks on the funnel’s tough leather. The difference between splatterpunk and quiet horror is that splatterpunk (more or less successfully) goes on to attempt the unspeakable. A splatterpunk treatment of the same story would describe in great and gleeful detail those events that Conan Doyle’s narrator refuses to see.

This example shows us that transgressive horror should not be understood as solely confined to the work of authors who identify as splatterpunks. Another prototype for the tale of torture is Franz Kafka’s story, “In the Penal Colony,” which envisions death by bureaucracy, where the condemned has no chance to defend himself from the machine that literally inscribes his crime on his body

with acidic needles. Elements of transgressive horror abound in the fiction of many different writers, including celebrated literary authors such as Joyce Carol Oates, in her portrayal of a serial killer (based on Jeffrey Dahmer) in *Zombie*, for example, or in the disturbing short story “Landfill” (2007) (again, based on a real tragedy, which Oates was accused of cruelly exploiting) about a new student who is trying to fit in at university. In a bizarre accident, somewhat attributable to his fraternity “friends’” indifference, he ends up falling into the university’s trash compactor and getting crushed. Oates juxtaposes imagining his lonely and horrible death with his parents’ grief and the voices of his amoral, self-centered dorm-mates for a devastating effect.

The excesses of transgressive horror often tend to be conflated with cruel and “sick” producers, and such horror is accordingly often met with protests. Bret Easton Ellis’s 1991 novel *American Psycho*, for example, with its stomach-churning descriptions of the predations of a Wall Street yuppie serial killer, outraged certain feminist groups, such as the National Organization for Women, whose members read the book as a straightforward reflection of the mind of its author and vehemently protested its publication, echoing Datlow’s critique of splatterpunk as violence against women. Ellis was even barred from entering Euro Disney following the book’s publication. Many protesters of *American Psycho* badly missed the point, as Linda Kauffman writes, that the book as transgressive horror was “a death letter for the consumptive greed and entitlement of the 1980s” (Kauffman 1998, pp. 249–51).

The moral panics in Anglo-American culture over “video nasties” in the 1980s and school shootings in the 1990s are just two examples of how the vilified excesses of transgressive horror are taken as condemnations of the character and motives of horror readers and fans. The term “video nasties” refers specifically to a list of seventy-four films which were banned in the United Kingdom under the Video Recordings Act, which was introduced as a private member’s bill in the British Parliament in 1982 and became law in 1984. In *The Pleasures of Horror*, Hills, like Jancovich, theorizes the horror fan as inherently anti-censorship, arguing that censorship in fact functions as a kind of “engine” of performative horror fandom, and using the “nasties” panic to support this argument (98). Hills cites Kim Newman’s story, “Where the Bodies are Buried 3: Black and White and Red All Over,” which situates its horrific events explicitly and ironically against a narrative of tabloid journalism and the “nasties” panic. Newman’s fictional film *Where the Bodies Are Buried* is also an intertextual nod to the *Nightmare on Elm Street*/Freddie Krueger horror franchise, with its wisecracking, knife-clawed monster Rob Hackwill. Hills contends that mobilizing subcultural capital (horror fan knowledge of the intertexts of his stories) and the discourse of horror censorship engages the cultural politics of horror, not only in the form of academic theories about literary appreciation as well as horror’s meanings and effects: “Newman’s fictions thus intertextually occupy a specific ‘space of possibles’ in the field of horror, indicating a multiple series of bids for cultural value, not all of which are strictly embedded in a neatly ‘bounded’ field of horror” (Hills 2005, p. 178).

Newman's story alludes to the "nasties" moral panic, sparked by a tabloid crusade against horror films, such as *The Driller Killer* (1979), and taken up by a group (now called Mediawatch) led by Mary Whitehouse. As an elderly journalist character in Newman's story satirically remarks, "Punters don't want blather about philosophical illnesses. They want something to blame. It's usually in the water. Maybe Satanic Heavy Metal" (Newman 1995, p. 287). In the case of the video "nasties" panic, accusing fingers were pointed at a number of horror films newly available on videocassette for private home rental. As a result, these films were banned for many years. In mapping similar instances in an unfolding plot that blurs the fiction of the film and the fiction of serial murder within the fiction of Newman's story, the cultural criminalization of horror fandom is subverted by inviting the reader to participate in the constant slippage among the supernatural monster Hallwill, the mobs engaging in moral panic egged on by authorities, and a "true crime" discourse of discovering the killer's bodies and gradually uncovering the "real" monster.

Another important example of the cultural criminalization of transgressive horror is documented in Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine* (2004), in which Moore seeks to uncover the reasons for the appalling school shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, in 1999. In his film, Moore alludes to the mainstream media emphasis upon the incorrect allegation that mass murderers Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold were fans of shock rocker Marilyn Manson, who uses horror iconography as part of his stage performance and persona. When Moore interviews Manson on the subject of the Columbine killings, Manson, his demonic makeup notwithstanding, is cogent, lucid, and reasonable, far from the drooling, anti-social madman urging disturbed fans to slaughter as he was depicted in some of the media attempts to blame him for Columbine.

Although Manson published a riposte to his accusers in the June 1999 edition of *Rolling Stone*, the persistence of "cultural criminalization" adheres, and the Columbine-Marilyn Manson link has become entrenched in the cultural memory as much as the killers' connection with violent video games such as *Doom*. For Manson, this association had certain repercussions, both for his fans and for certain American youth who became even marginally associated with horror fandom: for students, for example, who wore punk, Goth, or heavy metal styles or who produced "writing reflecting an interest in the 'dark side' of life, surveillance and FBI 'student profiling' became routine" (Muzzatti 2004, p. 150). An article published in the *New York Times* following the massacre reveals the fascination and stigmatization associated with the renewed monstrosity of the "Goth" subcultural style as producing amoral "superpredators in waiting" (Goldberg).³

As Muzzatti notes, this construction of the dangerous, abnormally dressed young horror fan serves the policing strategy of a neoconservative discourse that works to obscure "the greatest threat to young people in the U.S.": "the concentration of wealth, the hijacking of government by Christian supremacists and the transnational classes, and an adult population so distracted or

paralysed by unwarranted fear that it ... acquiesces to policies and practices more indicative of a corporate-fascist state than a liberal democracy" (2004, p. 151). A political connection is thus established between horror fiction, its readers, and what Brian Massumi calls the "politics of everyday fear": a connection which contemporary horror often exploits (Massumi 1993).

Whereas 1980s splatterpunk was characteristically redolent of Brophy's "horrority," mingling a subversive glee with its "splatstick," some extreme horror seems to evade such social confrontations for a more nihilistic outlook. While the satiric humor of *American Psycho* was lost on many of its critics, no real humor can be found in Ketchum's first novel, *Off Season* (1980), where a group of friends are butchered and eaten by a feral family of cave-dwelling cannibals. This type of transgressive horror can be directly traced to the apocalyptic strain of family horror films of the 1970s, such as Wes Craven's *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977) or Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974).

Transgressive horror is notable for two formal elements: body horror and its close relative the bad death. Body horror does not need to involve mutilation or death, but does deal with shocking and sickening imagery, as with the (recently filmed) Clive Barker story, "Dread," which describes the torture of a vegetarian woman locked up in a room with a joint of beef as the only food available to her. The villain describes the dilemma he has put her in: "If the meat revolted when it was fresh, what about her disgust at rotted meat? ... The longer she waits to eat, the more disgusted she becomes with what she's been given to feed on." Here, the sickening affect is accomplished through the protagonist's narration: "Steve seemed to taste the rotten flesh in the back of his throat. His mind found a stench to imagine, and created a gravy of putrescence to run over his tongue. How could she do it?" (Barker 1988, Volume 2, p. 18). Barker has a particularly stylized and inventive approach to "body horror" and the bad death. His framing story for *The Books of Blood* inscribes its texts upon a human body, like the torture machine in Franz Kafka's penal colony, and its motto proclaims, punningly, "Every body is a book of blood. Wherever we're opened, we're red" (Barker 1988).

Imagining bodies subjected to machines in another way, in Harlan Ellison's "I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream," the characters are terrorized by a merciless and hate-filled computer, "AM," who is constantly inventing ways to torture them: "AM said it with the sliding cold horror of a razor blade slicing my eyeball. AM said it with the bubbling thickness of my lungs filling with phlegm, drowning me from within. AM said it with the shriek of babies being ground beneath blue-hot rollers. AM said it with the taste of maggoty pork" (Ellison 1972, p. 25). Contrast this with the much funnier and thoroughly organic body horror of Joe Lansdale's "On the Far Side of the Cadillac Desert with Dead Folks": "A white pustule the size of a thumb tip had taken up residence on the left side of his snout, and it looked like a pearl onion in a turd" (Skipp and Spector 1989, p. 324). Later, this horrific pimple memorably and disgustingly bursts.

In extreme horror stories, such as Barker's "Rawhead Rex," a bad death often befalls a child, which tends to be taboo, even in most horror: "The mouth was wider even than he'd dreamed it, a hole which he was being delivered into, head first. It smelt like the dustbins at the back of the school canteen, times a million. He was sick down its throat, as it bit the top of his head off" (Barker 1988, p. 72). Chuck Palahniuk's *Haunted: A Novel in Stories* features some spectacularly bad deaths, particularly in "Hot Potting," in which death by first boiling, then being devoured by wolves, is dwelt on in detail.

Humor vis-à-vis body horror and the bad death allows the reader to face fearful subjects, such as the deaths of family members. For example, in Robert Bloch's story "A Case of the Stubborns" (1976), a dead grandfather refuses to be buried and insists upon eating hearty meals with his increasingly appalled family, even though he's getting "ripe," flies are buzzing around him, and the neighbors are fleeing. A wise woman comes up with the solution: giving the zombified curmudgeon a black napkin to wipe his mouth after dinner, upon which he can see crawling maggots, finally convincing him that he should go and lie down decently. Nancy Kilpatrick's "Farm Wife" (2000) is another example of a horror story, in which the pragmatic narrator dispatches her husband, who has turned vampire with the same trick that she has learned to kill mosquitoes; by waiting patiently and flexing her arm until a vein swells up, exploding the parasite, in true "splatstick" fashion.

Another good example of the comedic tension-reliever is Dan Simmons's *homage* to Dante's *Inferno*, "Vanni Fucci is Alive and Well and Living in Hell" (1988). This story again demonstrates the transgressive nature of splatterpunk in its challenge to religious authority and irreverent use of a canonical text. The furious Fucci, condemned with the others of his *Bolgia* filled with "shit and sinners" in Hell to endure eight episodes a day of the nauseatingly hypocritical televangelist Brother Freddy's "Hallelujah Breakfast Club" show, expresses his outrage by giving God "the fig" with immediate and amusing consequences for all the hypocrites in the televangelist's circle, in the television studio and in the audience (Simmons 1990, p. 158).

Vanni Fucci had said that all thieves within a hundred yards of his blasphemy traditionally were transformed. Out of 319 audience members present that morning, 226 were unaccounted for the next day. The auditorium was filled with screams as those who stayed human watched their husbands or wives or parents or in-laws or the stranger next to them transform in a flash into snakes, fanged newt-things, legless toads, giant iguanas, four-armed boa constrictors, and the usual assortment of *chelidrids*, *jaculi*, *phareans*, *cenchriads* and *amphisbands*. (p. 161)

Finally, another example of "apocalyptic laughter" directed at authoritative narratives is the tongue-in-cheek parodic "splatterpunk versus quiet horror" story, "Des Saucisses Sans Doute," by Peter Schneider, which employs the framing metafictional device of a faux editorial introduction, which presents an

“author” named “Pamela Jergens” in a highbrow style, preposterously littered with French phrases, as “One of our new breed of writers of *le horreur* [sic], as I like to call it. . . . ‘I disdain the recent work of the so-called splatterpunks,’ says Pamela. ‘My work is instead the *matériel* of the night . . . of the dark places that live within us, expressed through only the subtlest of metaphors and signals’” (Schneider 1999, p. 362).

The story, “Des Saucisses Sans Doute,” by the refined advocate of quiet horror, “Pamela Jergens,” then begins with the following brutally violent descriptive passage, which provides a sudden, jolting contrast with the previous passage and would be appallingly offensive, as *American Psycho* was taken to be, had it not been situated in the context of satire: “I brandished the severed left tit of the blond chick in one hand. It had not been a clean cut—Momma never got me braces when I was growing up” (p. 362). The brief story becomes more absurd, hallucinatory, and surreal in its violence as it continues—the monstrous narrator’s tongue turns into a “tempered steel fork,” which he or she uses to sever the victim’s legs and attach them to his or her own body. Then a passage follows, which temporarily relieves the surrealism as the narrator’s alarm rings and he or she wakes up to “no blood, no breasts,” that is, until the narrator, preparing breakfast, splits an English muffin “open with my stainless steel forked tongue and watched the surface of my coffee as a taupe nipple bobbed insouciantly to the surface” (p. 363).

The political potency of splatterpunk and extreme horror is, thus, derived from its willingness to give “the fig” to all authoritative systems: including the cultural systems of distinction that govern what is acceptable to show and not show, what can be textually poached (television shows) and what cannot (Dante), what is in good taste and what is in poor taste. It is not intended to make us comfortable—rather, by unsettling distinctions and exposing hypocrisies, it brings the stark horror of contemporary reality to the surface and refuses to let us stir it back into the depths.

NOTES

1. Distinctions between the highbrow and lowbrow that outline what forms of horror are culturally acceptable are also necessarily contingent upon the state of the art and the conditions of reception. Horror in all forms of media has become much more graphic due to changes in taste culture and in technologies of special effects. It must be noted that “horror,” as a label, conceals the creep of gory violence into more mainstream and nongeneric productions, including primetime television.
2. A “splatter-feminism,” which deserves a much fuller discussion, can be discerned in the nineties-era work of writers, such as Kathe Koja, Christa Faust, Caitlín R. Kiernan, and Billy Martin (formerly Poppy Z. Brite), to name a few. Splatterpunk feminism foregrounds gender transgressions, subcultural styles, deviant sexualities, and strong, sometimes terrifying, women/genderqueer characters.

3. Dick Hebdige theorizes “subculture” as that which simultaneously opposes and operates within the mainstream, insistently calling attention to the ideological underpinnings of “normal” facades, thereby contradicting the “naturalness” of dominant discourses. Style is therefore the vehicle of a subtle “challenge to hegemony”: “expressed obliquely,” style operates “at the level of signs”; “pregnant with significance,” and connotation, style is the bearer of “hidden messages inscribed in code on the glossy surfaces” (Hebdige 1979, pp. 12–18).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barker, Clive. 1988. *Books of Blood*. Vol. 1–3. London: Time Warner.
- Bloch, Robert. 1976 [1987]. A Case of the Stubborns. In *Last Rites: The Selected Short Stories of Robert Bloch, Volume 3*, 351–364. San Francisco: Underwood-Miller.
- Bloch, Robert. 1991. *Psycho-paths*. New York: TOR.
- Britton, Andrew, Richard Lippe, Tony Williams, and Robin Wood. 1979. *American Nightmare: Essays on the Horror Film*. Toronto: Festival of Festivals.
- Brophy, Philip. 2000. Horrality. In *The Horror Reader*, ed. Ken Gelder, 276–284. London: Routledge.
- Datlow, Ellen, and Terri Windling, eds. 1996. *The Year’s Best Fantasy and Horror: Ninth Annual Collection*. New York: St. Martin’s Press.
- Doyle, Arthur Conan. 1989. The Leather Funnel. In *The Best Horror Stories of Arthur Conan Doyle*, ed. Frank D. McSherry, Martin H. Greenberg, and Charles G. Waugh. Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers.
- Edelstein, David. 2006. Torture Porn: The Sadistic Movie Trend. *New York*. <http://nymag.com/movies/features/15622/>. Accessed March 17, 2009.
- Ellis, Bret Easton. 1991. *American Psycho*. New York: Random House.
- Ellison, Harlan. 1972. I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream. In *Alone Against Tomorrow*. Toronto: Collier-Macmillan.
- Golden, Christopher S., ed. 1992. *Cut! Horror Writers on Horror Film*. New York: Berkley Books.
- Hebdige, Dick. 1979. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. New York: Methuen.
- Hills, Matthew. 2005. *The Pleasures of Horror*. New York: Continuum Press.
- Hodge, Brian. 1989. Dead Giveaway. In *Book of the Dead*, ed. John Skipp and Craig Spector, 343–355. New York: Mark V. Ziesing.
- Hutchings, Peter. 1996. Tearing Your Soul Apart: Horror’s New Monsters. In *Modern Gothic: A Reader*, ed. Victor Sage and Allan Lloyd Smith, 89–103. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Joshi, S.T. 2004. *Evolution of the Weird Tale*. New York: Hippocampus Press.
- . 2006. *Icons of Horror and the Supernatural: An Encyclopedia of Our Worst Nightmares*. West Port, CT: Greenwood.
- Kauffman, Linda S. 1998. *Bad Girls and Sick Boys: Fantasies in Contemporary Art and Culture*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Kilpatrick, Nancy. 2000. *The Vampire Stories of Nancy Kilpatrick*. Oakville: Mosaic Press.
- King, Stephen. 1981. *Danse Macabre*. New York: Berkley Books.
- Kristeva, Julia. 1982. *Powers of Horror: Essays on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Massumi, Brian, ed. 1993. *The Politics of Everyday Fear*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Monteleone, Thomas, and Elizabeth Monteleone, eds. 1995. *Borderlands*. Stone Mountain, GA: White Wolf Publishing.
- Muzzatti, Stephen L. 2004. Criminalising Marginality and Resistance: Marilyn Manson, Columbine and Cultural Criminology. In *Cultural Criminology Unleashed*, ed. Jeff Ferrell, Keith Hayward, Wayne Morrison, and Mike Presdee, 143–154. London: Routledge.
- Newman, Kim. 1995. Where the Bodies are Buried 3: Black and White and Red All Over. In *Dark Terrors: The Gollancz Book of Horror*, ed. Stephen Jones and David Sutton, 280–308. London: Victor Gollancz.
- Oates, Joyce Carol. 2007. Landfill. In *The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror: Twentieth Annual Collection*, ed. Ellen Datlow, Kelly Link, and Gavin J. Grant, 128–138. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Pinedo, Isabel Cristina. 1997. *Recreational Terror: Women and the Pleasures of Horror Film Viewing*. New York: SUNY Press.
- Schneider, Peter. 1999. Des Saucisses, Sans Doute. In *1999: Twenty-Nine Original Tales of Horror and Suspense*, ed. Sarrantonio Al, 361–363. New York: Perennial HarperCollins.
- Schow, David. 1989. Jerry's Kids Meet Wormboy. In *Book of the Dead*, ed. John Skipp and Craig Spector, 356–378. New York: Mark V. Ziesing.
- Simmons, Dan. 1990/1988. Vanni Fucci is Alive and Well and Living in Hell. In *Dark Visions*, ed. Douglas E. Winter, 121–136. London: Victor Gollancz.
- Skipp, John, and Craig Spector. 1989. *Book of the Dead*. New York: Mark V. Ziesing.
- Wagner, Karl Edward, ed. 1990. *The Year's Best Horror Stories XVIII*. New York: Daw Books.
- Williams, Linda. 1991. Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess. *Film Quarterly* 44 (4): 2–13.



Boundary Crossing and Cultural Creation: Transgressive Horror and Politics of the 1990s

Coco d'Hont

While horror fiction has always crossed socio-cultural boundaries, this chapter explores horror fiction which makes transgression into its main focus. The chapter concentrates on transgressive horror published during the 1990s, an era during which transgression gained new prominence as a critical concept. In 1993, Michael Silverblatt described transgressive writing as “this *new* new thing,” which “has violation at its core, violation of norms, of humanistic enterprise, of the body.” Although transgression could be applied to earlier texts such as the oeuvres of Marquis de Sade and the Beat writers, the 1990s saw a unique new conceptualization of the concept in fictional form. This transformation can be linked to a variety of extra-textual socio-political developments, ranging from the rise of queer theory as a result of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, via post-Reagan neoliberal prosperity, to the debate on posthumanism and postmodernism. Even though transgressive fiction in general, and transgressive horror in particular, features disturbing images of violated bodies that are often grotesque distortions of reality, this type of fiction is deeply intertwined with the politics and culture of its extra-textual context.

After Silverblatt’s discussion, the “transgressive” label was applied to a range of authors, including but not limited to Dennis Cooper, Kathy Acker, and Bret Easton Ellis. It became a problematic concept, often used as shorthand for shocking, violent, and pornographic content and was criticized by feminists for its frequent depiction of violence against women (Tauchert 2008, p. 2). Despite these problems, transgression’s emphasis on the negotiation of socio-cultural

C. d’Hont (✉)
Independent Scholar, Norwich, UK

boundaries seems highly relevant when considering horror literature produced during this decade. While authors such as Acker and Cooper are rarely regarded as horror authors, their detailed depictions of (often sexualized) violence do invite crossover readings of the horror elements in their work. Furthermore, horror fiction produced during this period by authors such as Poppy Z. Brite, Dean Koontz, and Stephen King often explored transgressive themes. The plot of King's novel *Gerald's Game* (1993), for example, revolves around the fluid boundary between reality and imagination and draws much of its terror from the question whether its villain is real or not. Despite its flaws as a critical concept, transgression features in much of the horror or horror-*ish* fiction released during the 1990s.

In order for transgression to be useful as a critical concept, a clearer understanding of its meaning is needed. Throughout this chapter, transgression is defined, not as mere gesture or shock, but as a process that (re)constructs boundaries, following Georges Bataille's suggestion that "[o]rganised transgression together with the taboo makes social life what it is" (Bataille 1987, p. 65). In other words, transgression is defined as a social rather than an anti-social phenomenon and relates to limits like "a spiral which no simple infraction can exhaust" (Foucault 1977, p. 35). This definition of transgression as a process, which highlights, visualizes, and redraws socio-cultural limits, avoids the impreciseness of many existing definitions of the concept. It neither overstates transgression's political power, nor does it read transgression as an attack on unchanging values and ideologies (Scholder and Silverberg 1991, p. xvi; Stallybrass and White 1986, p. 17). In the context of horror fiction, transgression clarifies how this type of fiction explores and negotiates, rather than eradicates, a range of boundaries and limits. Specifically, these include boundaries between fact and fiction, high and low culture, and mind and matter. By crossing these limits, transgressive horror interrogates central social ideologies, including consumerism, the nuclear family, and even genre conventions. Transgressive horror interacts with limits, not in an attempt to destroy social order, but to interrogate socio-cultural constructions of meaning.

The 1990s were not only an important decade for transgressive fiction but also for horror studies as an academic discipline. Several key works were published during this decade, including Noël Carroll's *The Philosophy of Horror* (1990), Carol Clover's *Men, Women and Chain Saws* (1992), Mark Jancovich's *Horror* (1992), and Judith Halberstam's *Skin Shows* (1995). While many of these texts focus on horror film rather than literature, they often regard horror as a political genre. Clover, for example, studies the portrayal of women in slasher films and concludes that "there is something about the victim function that wants manifestation in a female, and something about the monster and hero functions that want expression in a male," exposing how horror reflects, and possibly maintains or criticizes, gendered inequality in its extra-textual context (1992, p. 12). This focus on gender and sexuality invites connections with queer and gender studies, fields which developed simultaneously with horror studies. Theories such as Judith Butler's definition of gender as a per-

formance in *Gender Trouble* (1990) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's analysis of the homosocial in *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) depict gender and sexuality as fluid social constructions, rather than stable biological facts. Not coincidentally, transgressive horror of the period frequently uses the body as a metaphorical space where boundaries are being transgressed, be they physical, moral, or social. Although such themes had featured in horror fiction before, they gained unprecedented prominence during the 1990s.

This chapter explores the range of boundaries transgressive horror interrogates, including the divide between mind and matter, fiction and reality, and high and low culture. It demonstrates how transgressive horror highlights that horror is inherent to society itself and does not emerge from some unspecified "outside." As a result, the transgressions transgressive horror describes reshape and maintain, rather than destroy, social order. The chapter analyzes three novels in depth, not because these are the only ones to tackle these issues, or necessarily the best of their kind, but because they illustrate the variety of forms transgressive horror can take.¹ Each of these texts reinvents and transforms a well-known horror trope, such as the serial killer or the vampire, into a transgressive metaphor that visualizes and interrogates a specific element of its extra-textual context. Horror emerges less from these re-imagined horror tropes themselves and more from the collapsing boundaries they are made to signify.

Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991), first of all, interrogates the boundary between mind and matter, using the serial killer as a metaphor to visualize the symbolic violence provoked by neoliberalism. Secondly, Poppy Z. Brite's *Lost Souls* (1992) re-imagines the vampire to interrogate the perils of the nuclear family, highlighting how its paternalism facilitates gendered inequality. Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000), finally, demonstrates how transgressive horror interrogates the boundary between popular fiction and literature through its discussion of a haunted house. These three authors move back and forth across socio-cultural boundaries, inviting a conceptualization of transgressive horror, less as a genre, more as a mode of reading. However, they also cover common themes: their emphasis on the body as a metaphor, their analysis of gender as a construction, and their connection of mainstream and margins. More than other types of horror fiction, transgressive horror is a form of fiction that interrogates the ideologies of its extra-textual context.

MIND AND MATTER: THE SERIAL KILLER AS A TRANSGRESSIVE METAPHOR

The controversial reception history of Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991) is well-known: original publisher Simon & Schuster rejected the manuscript after its violent scenes came to light. The novel was subsequently published by Random House and harshly condemned by many, particularly by feminists.² *American Psycho* is narrated by Patrick Bateman, a Wall Street businessman who commits, or imagines, horrific acts of murder and torture. These

acts are described in graphic detail and increase in viciousness and frequency as the novel progresses, making *American Psycho* a visceral and challenging read. *American Psycho* is, in some respects, a sophisticated literary novel which employs a range of literary devices, including a fragmented narrative, swift changes of tone and style, and satirical exaggerations of 1980s popular culture. However, it also reinvents the legacy of horror and serial killer narratives and has been described as “serial killer chic” (Simpson 2000, p. 150). Its depictions of murder echo true crime texts such as Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood* (1966) and Vincent Bugliosi’s and Curt Gentry’s *Helter Skelter* (1974), as well as fictional portrayals of serial killers ranging from Jim Thompson’s *The Killer Inside Me* (1952) to Thomas Harris’s *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988). The novel conforms to conventions of the fictional serial killer as “the blank surface that reflects the commonplace anxieties and crises of his culture” but also crosses genre boundaries to surprise its readership. The novel takes the conventions of the serial killer narrative to an extreme and develops the serial killer story into a complex literary text (Seltzer 1998, p. 126).

American Psycho is not an isolated example of horrific entertainment, but it uses its transgressions to interrogate how ideologies are constructed in its extra-textual context. The transgressive horror of the novel lies not primarily in its ability to shock, but more in its potential to question and destabilize. Its violent scenes are embedded in an exaggerated depiction of 1980s New York, which satirizes the neoliberal ideal Patrick tries to embody. The bodily violations he commits as a serial killer function as complex metaphors that highlight frequently obscured aspects of the ideologies the novel depicts. Due to its inclusion of graphic violence, the novel is able to dissect these ideologies and visualize their instability, tracing the impending collapse of Patrick’s persona as the story progresses. The novel’s horror elements serve more complex purposes than entertainment alone: they penetrate the surface of Patrick’s lifestyle and expose the violence it demands.

The novel’s horror originates not primarily from Patrick’s murders, but from the fetishistic objectification of commodities prescribed by the capitalist universe he inhabits. The fictional Wall Street where Patrick works—or pretends to work—is an exaggerated depiction of the extra-textual street and the neoliberal ideals it came to represent during the 1980s. *American Psycho* is packed with references to Donald Trump and other neoliberal icons and satirizes Gordon Gekko’s famous statement that “[g]reed ... is good” (*Wall Street* 1987). It translates this credo into an overblown version of Marx’s concept of commodity fetishism, exposing how “the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life” (1976, p. 77). Early in the novel, fetishism takes the form of an obsession with material objects. Patrick’s friend Timothy Price uses his Tumi attaché case and “Panasonic wallet-size cordless portable Easa phone” as fetishized signifiers to solidify his social status (Ellis 2011, p. 4). For Patrick himself, products fulfill a more uncanny function and seem to be the only way to ward off the “existential chasm” he occasionally experiences (p. 172). Products become more than just objects: they acquire the magic power to maintain his neoliberal identity.

The novel explores the troubling implications of this philosophy by extending its objectification to people, tracing how Patrick's unstable neoliberal persona demands the violation of human bodies to maintain the illusion of coherence. Paradoxically, his identity can only be maintained through the transgression of the limits of consumerism into the realm of physical consumption. Specifically, Patrick uses prostitutes as "objects" that can be bought and modified to represent the submissive femininity in contrast to which he defines his masculinity. The story uses the physical violence Patrick commits to expose the symbolic violence at the heart of this fetishistic system. Early on, Patrick narrates how he leads two prostitutes to his door, "both of them dressed and sobbing, bleeding but well-paid" (p. 169). Patrick's assertion that the women are "bleeding but well-paid" indicates a connection the novel envisions between violence and neoliberal ideology: violence is permitted and even "necessary" as long as its financial aspect is taken care of. Patrick envisions severe physical damage as a price well-paid for a significant sum of money, ignoring the deeply problematic consequences of this approach. Here the serial killer, with the ability to "confirm the darkest fears about human nature," has the ability to dissect extra-textual ideological dynamics (Simpson 2000, p. 14).

This is not the most poignant form of horror *American Psycho* identifies. The novel connects its violence to an increasing fragility of individual and collective identity. As the novel progresses, Patrick's identity gradually collapses, adding to the sense of terror and confusion. "I'm having a sort of hard time paying attention because my automated teller has started speaking to me," Patrick tells the reader, adding that he has also been disturbed by "a park bench that followed me for six blocks last Monday evening and it too spoke to me" (p. 380). These experiences can be read as the products of a delirious mind but also indicate Patrick's slipping dominance over objects and people. He tries to counter this process by engaging in even more extreme acts of violence, but these only increase his confusion and fear. "Maggots already writhe across the human sausage," he describes close to the novel's ending, "the drool pouring from my lips dribbles over them, and still I can't tell if I'm cooking any of this correctly" (pp. 332–3). His violence is not only horrific because of its brutality but also because it represents the collapse of the limits demarcating his neoliberal identity.

Toward the end of the novel, horror acquires a metaphysical quality, with Patrick describing a terrifying vision: "...where there was nature and earth, life and water, I saw a desert landscape that was unending, resembling some sort of crater, so devoid of reason and light and spirit that the mind could not grasp it on any sort of conscious level" (p. 360). Fiction and reality become conflated, and Patrick tiredly concludes that "the lines separating appearance—what you see—and reality—what you don't—become, well blurred" (p. 363). This desperate scene highlights the horror caused by Patrick's reliance on an artificial identity: "There is no real me, only an entity" (p. 362). The true horror of *American Psycho* is not its violence, however provocative and disturbing it may be. His activities as a serial killer merely symbolize and accelerate a much more

all-encompassing form of dread. Patrick's attempts to "fit in" with a system which relies on objectification expose the exploitation this system prescribes, but they also indicate its vulnerability (p. 228). Even though *American Psycho* exposes neoliberalism's mechanics, it does not destroy them or envision an alternative. Instead, the novel leaves the reader with the devastating suggestion that there is no escape, concluding that: "This is not an exit" (p. 384).

MAKING GENDER MEANINGFUL: TRANSGRESSION AS CONSTRUCTION

Whereas *American Psycho* uses the serial killer to expose the exploitative implications of commodity fetishism, Poppy Z. Brite's *Lost Souls* (1992) reinvents vampirism to dissect a different form of exploitation. Its discussion of vampirism as a metaphor for the power dynamics of the nuclear family outlines how the family ideal facilitates gendered inequality. *Lost Souls* narrates how its main character, Nothing, discovers that he is part of a family of vampires, headed by his father Zillah. The novel's writing style is considerably more "popular" than that of *American Psycho*. It offers little in the way of stylistic experimentation and reads, at least on the level of surface, as a typical horror genre piece. *Lost Souls* fits into a long tradition of vampire novels ranging from Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), and Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), to Laurell K. Hamilton's *Anita Blake* series (1993–present). However, just like *Dracula* uses the vampire to explore gender in a Victorian context, *Lost Souls* uses the vampire to interrogate the nuclear family in a contemporary setting, in which the notion of gender roles as a biological given was increasingly problematized. As is the case in *American Psycho*, the text highlights and explores limits through their transgression and turns the violated body into a transgressive object imbued with ideological meaning.

Lost Souls occupies a peculiar position within the vampire genre as it existed toward the end of the twentieth century. Contrary to texts such as Hamilton's *Guilty Pleasures* (1993) or later novels such as Charlaine Harris's *Sookie Stackhouse* series (2001–2014), the novel reads vampirism as a metaphor for the workings of the nuclear family, rather than as a rebellion against it. *Lost Souls* diverts from the conceptualization of the pre-millennial vampire as "anti-family" or a group of "attractive rebellious figures" (Nixon 1997, p. 122; Williamson 2005, p. 30). The novel's plot revolves around Nothing's search for his vampire family and the conflicts that occur when he meets his father Zillah. Interestingly, the novel never mentions HIV/AIDS, even though Brite discusses the illness extensively in *Exquisite Corpse* (1996). A possible reason for this is the novel's description of vampires and humans as "separate races" (p. 68). *Lost Souls* does not depict vampires as undead humans bitten by existing vampires. Instead, vampirism is a marker of difference, acting as a metaphor for the social boundaries the nuclear family ideal perpetuated in the novel's extra-textual context. The novel resists the interpretation of vampirism as

“nausea” and aggressively redefines it as a metaphor for a central social construct (Auerbach 1995, p. 175).³

It should not come as a surprise that the novel chooses the nuclear family as its focus. Taking into account the increasing prominence of theories which considered gender as a social construct during the 1990s,⁴ it seems self-evident that an institution which promotes strict gender roles as “natural” would be called into question. *Lost Souls* exposes how the ideal of “a young, married, heterosexual, white, middle-class couple with two children” is not a natural given, but an elaborate ideological construction (Gittins 1993, p. 3). In the novel, the limits of the family, as well as the power relationships *within* the family, are (re)produced through a variety of vampiric practices, including drinking blood. “Come and be one of us,” Zillah suggests, “or suffer the consequences of your refusal: die, or be alone, and never drink from the bottle of life again. *For the blood was the life*” (Brite 2010, p. 160). By choosing to transgress the physical boundaries between his own body and the bodies of his relatives, Nothing places himself within the strict limitations of the vampire family. “You’ve consigned yourself to a life of blood and murder,” he realizes, “you can never rejoin the daytime world” (p. 173). The fictionality and horrific physicality of vampirism may appear to be fundamentally at odds with idealistic conceptualizations of the nuclear family as a “mythical monolithic model” (Zinn and Eitzen 1987, p. 10). However, *Lost Souls* uses vampirism to demonstrate how the idealized nuclear family obscures its physical basis of sexual reproduction and blood relationships. By exposing this undercurrent, the novel opens up possibilities for the critical dissection of its harmful side effects.

Through its depiction of the family as vampiric, *Lost Souls* demonstrates how the nuclear family always already functions as a “one of the primary mechanisms for perpetuating social inequality” (Zinn and Eitzen 1987, p. xiv). In the novel, fathers use their power to (re)produce their own lives both physically (by feeding on people or producing new vampires) and ideologically (by creating the conditions for their power to persist). One horrific manifestation of this process is the novel’s depiction of the incestuous relationship between Nothing and his father. “As Zillah’s arms tightened around him,” the story narrates, “Nothing heard himself say: ‘Daddy.’ Zillah kissed his eyelids, his forehead, his lips. ‘Yes, that’s lovely. Call me that’” (Brite 2010, p. 233). *Lost Souls* follows existing accounts of the family as an ideological structure in which incest is a “normal” consequence of its emphasis on sexual reproduction, or even a “necessary” aspect of its constitution, rather than an aberration.⁵ “Mine,” Zillah asserts, “Mine more than anything was before, more than anything will ever be again, this is mine. My seed, my blood, my soul” (p. 324). Zillah’s desire to possess his son is described in explicitly physical terms, depicting his “seed” as a bodily fluid charged with associations of power. The physical transgressions Nothing and his father engage in create their family, not only as a hierarchical unit in itself but also as a basis for a social model characterized by strict patriarchal power relations.

The gendered consequences of this power structure are revealed in the horrific birth scenes the novel features. In *Lost Souls* vampires are lethal “[e]ven in the womb” because vampire babies kill their mothers when they are born (Brite 2010, p. 277). The novel’s graphic depictions of mutilated female bodies function as disturbing metaphors for the violent undercurrent of the family ideal. After Nothing’s birth, his mother’s vagina is described as “the poor torn passage that had given ... so many nights of idle pleasure. Ruined now, bloody” (p. 10). Nothing later concludes that the bond between him and his father “was forged in blood” (p. 233). The family, *Lost Souls* suggests, can only exist as a consequence of the transgression of the boundary between mind and matter, destroying the female body to continue its own existence. Vampires regard the death of women in childbirth as an unfortunate necessity at best, or an irrelevant side effect at worst. “They didn’t care about the girl,” the narrative continues after the vampires have discovered the pregnancy of Zillah’s human lover Ann. “It did not matter to them that another girl’s belly would swell with a malignant child, a child that would eventually rip her open and bleed her dry” (p. 245). Ann eventually dies during an abortion described as “a black nightmare of blood” (p. 338). Women, these bloody scenes of death and disfigurement suggest, have little or no agency within the system of gendered inequality the family ideal supports.

Lost Souls’s main source of horror is not its vampirism, but the violent ideology vampirism represents. Superficially, the novel suggests that queerness helps to envision an alternative to this “reproductive futurism” (Edelman 2004, p. 2). However, *Lost Souls* is ultimately pessimistic in its consideration of non-heteronormative sexuality as a basis for social transformation. While the novel discusses the homoerotic relationship between human friends Steve and Ghost in depth, and briefly offers Nothing the opportunity to escape Zillah’s violence by joining them, Nothing eventually becomes a vampire patriarch after Zillah’s death. His challenges of Zillah’s power and accusations that Zillah treats him “like I’m half sex slave and half lapdog” are temporary transgressions which ultimately reinforce Nothing’s position as a vampiric alpha male (p. 288). What makes the novel so terrifying is the suggestion that its gendered violence is perpetual. The vampires “have not forgotten their old customs” when the novel ends and are immortal because the limits of their family are constantly redrawn in relation to the changing societies in which it exists (p. 357). As is the case in *American Psycho*, boundary reconstruction through transgression is a continuous cyclical process which keeps limits in place rather than abolishing them.

HIGH OR LOW? REINVENTING THE HAUNTED HOUSE

Transgressive horror frequently re-imagines familiar tropes to facilitate its exploration of social, cultural, and moral boundaries, creating intimate connections between its fictional universe and the extra-textual context it is constructed in. The real horror of transgressive horror is usually not located in the trope itself, but in the ideology it is made to represent. Just like *American*

Psycho and *Lost Souls*, Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000) follows this literary path, re-imagining the haunted house to address the boundary between high and low culture through a literal problematization of high and low as spatial dimensions. The novel describes how main character Navidson and his family move into a house which hides an enormous and constantly changing labyrinth. The labyrinth eventually destroys Navidson's family, both literally and metaphorically. Predictably, *House of Leaves*'s subject matter frequently causes it to be "shelved in the horror section of bookstores" alongside other books which feature dwellings "in which a generally evil and ostensibly supernatural entity, traditionally a ghost, manifests itself" (Pressman 2006, p. 112; Koger 2014, p. 317).

As is the case in haunted house stories such as Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) and Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959), *House of Leaves*'s ghosts are ghosts from the past rather than literal supernatural beings. In contrast to other haunted house stories, the novel has a highly unusual style, which includes endless nested footnotes, several narrative layers, and unconventional typography. It has attracted critical acclaim and academic readings, with N. Katherine Hayles characterizing the novel as "a meta-physical enquiry" which is "[c]amouflaged as a haunted-house tale" (2002, p. 779). Danielewski's assertion that he wanted *House of Leaves* to be a novel "that would raise the bar" suggests that the text actively transgresses the boundary between high and low culture, exploring to what extent a horror theme can be developed into a challenging "literary" experience (as cited in McCaffery and Gregory 2003, p. 107). As a result, Danielewski seems to have more in common with James Joyce or Jorge Luis Borges than with "pulp fiction."

Danielewski's embedding of the novel into a framework of heavy cultural theory redefines the haunted house as a space of transgression, rather than as a safe and stable home. The narrative explicitly characterizes Navidson's house as *unheimlich* because it is "neither homey nor protective, nor comforting nor familiar. It is alien, exposed, and unsettling" (Danielewski 2000, p. 28). The novel's depiction of the house as an unstable space echoes Freud's definition of the *Unheimliche* as "everything that was intended to remain secret, hidden away, and has come into the open" (2003, p. 134). The novel uses the term *unheimlich* to refer to the anxiety caused by the emergence of something familiar that has been repressed. It describes the house as "purely American," a representation of American ideologies of home ownership and family values (Danielewski 2000, p. 357). However, it is also "[e]dgeless for one thing, something a compendium of diverse cultures definitely requires" (p. 357). The novel "defamiliarizes," to borrow Victor Shklovsky's concept, the house as a safe environment, turning it into a transgressive space where the ideologies it represents can be interrogated (1965, p. 13).

The horrific sense of unease the *unheimliche* house evokes exposes the traumas that underlie the happy surface of Navidson's family. The haunting of the house by a rapidly growing labyrinth undermines "the received order of time and space," causing "the house and the haunted characters [to] merge into

each other" (Brummett 1985, pp. 251, 257). Navidson's exploration of the labyrinth he describes as "[n]o light, no humidity.... No air movement ... no sounds ... walls are uniformly black with a slightly 'ashen' hue, there are no windows, moldings, or other decorative elements" brings to light his own traumatic past experiences as a war photographer, as well as the cause of his wife Karen's claustrophobia (Danielewski 2000, p. 370). The labyrinth is described as a "spatial rape," creating a disturbing image of a house that actively brutalizes its occupiers: "[T]he walls close in with enough force to splinter the dresser, snap the frame of the bed, and hurl lamps from their nightstands, bulbs popping, light executed" (pp. 55, 341). This destructive force is not unknown but emerges from the troubled pasts of the house's occupiers. *House of Leaves* rejects the notion of horror as coming from an outside source and presents it as a "familiar" form of terror.

The novel does not only feature transgressions within its own text but also transgresses literary rules and conventions to horrify its readers. The boundary separating fiction and reality is transgressed because "the specific structure of *House of Leaves* makes it clear from the onset that this [intellectual uncertainty] does exist for the characters and the reader" (Bemong 2003). The many narrative layers the novel consists of makes it extremely difficult to keep track of the different "truths" the story offers, pushing the reader back and forth between the conflicting perspectives of different narrators. More importantly, the novel's unconventional use of footnotes and typography turn it into "a multicursal labyrinth in its own right" making the reading experience into one that mimics Navidson's explorations (Hamilton 2008, p. 12). As Navidson disappears deeper into the labyrinth, the words describing his quest are printed backward, upside down, or in strange shapes. This stylistic choice turns the reading experience into a remarkably confusing and physical one; readers are forced to turn the heavy book upside down or read parts in front of a mirror. In other words, "the act of reading the novel [becomes] an unfamiliar experience" which forces the reader to abandon their ideas about literary conventions and submit themselves to the terrifying force of the book, while trying to navigate its Escher-like pages (Hamilton 2008, p. 14).

Horror in *House of Leaves* is both metafictional and metaphysical: the novel crosses literary boundaries to explore esoteric questions about knowledge, truth, and existence. Its unusual form follows Patricia Waugh's definition of metafiction as a text that "self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (Danielewski 2000, p. 2). The novel connects this transgression of the boundary between fact and fiction with a questioning of the limits of knowledge and existence itself. Rather than offering an explanation of the labyrinth, the text leaves it as an incomprehensible, and therefore terrifying, void at the heart of its story. Navidson's letter to Karen describes this void in religious terms, concluding that "God's a house. Which is not to say that our house is God's house or even a house of God. What I mean to say is that our house is God" (p. 390). The horror of the haunted house does not lie

in its occupation by monsters but in its status as a phenomenon that is incomprehensible, and therefore uncontrollable, by the people inhabiting it. Rather than envisioning the haunted house as a space of entertainment, *House of Leaves* turns it into an epistemological metaphor that questions the boundaries between fact and fiction and the very nature of reality itself.

CONCLUSION: REVEAL, RECREATE, RE-IMAGINE

The three novels discussed in this chapter demonstrate that transgressive fiction can take a variety of forms. Its horror often emerges from unexpected places: not primarily from the horror tropes it depicts, and more from its re-imagination of those tropes to problematize seemingly stable ideas, truths, and ideologies. *American Psycho* redevelops the serial killer into a critical metaphor to explore the mind/matter boundary and visualize the harmful effects of the neoliberal emphasis on consumerism. *Lost Souls* redefines the vampire to interrogate the masculinity/femininity boundary and its connection to the nuclear family ideal, highlighting how this ideological construction maintains gendered inequality within families and in the societies in which they exist. *House of Leaves*, finally, transgresses the boundary between high and low culture, turning the haunted house into a metafictional and metaphysical device that forces readers to question literary and existential conventions.

The transgressive element of these novels does not lie in their ability to shock—although it is hard to deny that the graphic violence and incest of texts such as *Lost Souls* will shock many readers. Instead, these novels use horror to represent, exaggerate, and interrogate how central social ideologies, such as consumerism, gender roles, and “high literature,” are constructed through the constant (re)drawing of their boundaries. Rather than conceptualizing horror as an attack “from outside” on a stable set of values or norms, transgressive fiction highlights the unstable and changing nature of these constructions. Horror is inherent to, and caused by, the very ideological focus of society itself and ultimately maintains and transforms, rather than destroys, social order. Transgressive horror is more than entertainment alone: it provides opportunities for the critical dissection of perceived truths and opens up opportunities for the imagination of alternatives.

NOTES

1. This chapter cannot possibly cover all authors who explore transgression in their work, even when restricting itself to the 1990s, but readers might want to explore authors such as J.G. Ballard, Clive Barker, Mary Gaitskill, A.M. Homes, Chuck Palahniuk, and Irvine Welsh.
2. For more in-depth discussions of *American Psycho*'s publication history, see Young and Caveney (1992) and Freccero (1997).
3. According to Auerbach, “[t]he AIDS epidemic, widely publicized by the early 1980s, infected the decade’s already stricken vampires ... Once the etiology of

- AIDS became clear, blood could no longer be the life; vampirism mutated from hideous appetite to nausea" (1995, p. 175).
4. Apart from Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990), important texts in this field include bell hooks's *Outlaw Culture* (1994), Kate Bornstein's *Gender Outlaw* (1994), R.W. Connell's *Masculinities* (1995), and Judith Halberstam's *Female Masculinity* (1998).
 5. See Gittins (1993, p. 52) and Bell (1993, p. 3).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Auerbach, Nina. 1995. *Our Vampires, Our Selves*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bataille, Georges. 1987. *Eroticism*. Trans. Mary Dalwood. London: Boyars.
- Bell, Vikki. 1993. *Interrogating Incest: Feminism, Foucault and the Law*. London: Routledge.
- Bemong, Nele. 2003. Exploration #6: The Uncanny in Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*. *Image & Narrative: Online Magazine of the Visual Narrative* 5. <http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/uncanny/nelebemong.htm>. Accessed May 26, 2017.
- Brite, Poppy Z. 2010. *Lost Souls*. London: Penguin.
- Brummett, Barry. 1985. Electric Literature as Equipment for Living: Haunted House Films. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 2 (3): 247–261.
- Clover, Carol. 1992. *Men, Women and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Danielewski, Mark Z. 2000. *House of Leaves*. 2nd ed. New York: Pantheon.
- Edelman, Lee. 2004. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Ellis, Bret Easton. 2011. *American Psycho*. London: Vintage.
- Foucault, Michel. 1977. A Preface to Transgression. In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, 29–53. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Freccero, Carla. 1997. Historical Violence, Censorship, and the Serial killer: The Case of *American Psycho*. *Diacritics* 27 (2): 44–58.
- Freud, Sigmund. 2003. *The Uncanny*. Trans. David McLintock. London: Penguin.
- Gittins, Diana. 1993. *The Family in Question: Changing Households and Familiar Ideologies*. 2nd ed. Houndmills: Macmillan.
- Hamilton, Nathalie. 2008. The A-Mazing House: The Labyrinth as Theme and Form in Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*. *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 50 (1): 3–16.
- Hayles, N. Katherine. 2002. Saving the Subject: Remediation in *House of Leaves*. *American Literature* 74 (4): 779–806.
- Koger, Grove. 2014. Haunted House. In *The Ashgate Encyclopedia of Literary and Cinematic Monsters*, ed. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, 317–320. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing.
- Marx, Karl. 1976. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One*. Trans. Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin.
- McCaffery, Larry, and Sinda Gregory. 2003. Haunted House – An Interview with Mark Z. Danielewski. *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 44 (2): 99–135.

- Nixon, Nicola. 1997. When Hollywood Sucks, or, Hungry Girls, Lost Boys, and Vampirism in the Age of Reagan. In *Blood Read: The Vampire as Metaphor in Contemporary Culture*, ed. Joan Gordon and Veronica Hollinger, 115–128. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Pressman, Jessica. 2006. *House of Leaves*: Reading the Networked Novel. *Studies in American Fiction* 34 (1): 107–128.
- Scholder, Amy, and Ira Silverberg, eds. 1991. *High Risk: An Anthology of Forbidden Writings*. London: Serpent's Tail.
- Seltzer, Mark. 1998. *Serial Killers: Death and Life in America's Wound Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Shklovsky, Victor. 1965. Art as Technique. In *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, ed. and trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, 3–24. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Silverblatt, Michael. 1993. Shock Appeal: Who Are These Writers, and Why Do They Want to Hurt Us?: The New Fiction of Transgression. *LA Times*, 1 August. http://articles.latimes.com/1993-08-01/books/bk-21466_1_young-writers. Accessed November 22, 2012.
- Simpson, Philip L. 2000. *Psycho Paths: Tracking the Serial Killer through Contemporary American Film and Television*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Stallybrass, Peter, and Allon White. 1986. *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Tauchert, Ashley. 2008. *Against Transgression*. Malden: Blackwell.
- Wall Street*. 1987. Directed by Oliver Stone. 20th Century Fox.
- Williamson, Milly. 2005. *The Lure of the Vampire: Gender, Fiction and Fandom from Bram Stoker to Buffy*. London: Wallflower.
- Young, Elizabeth, and Graham Caveney, eds. 1992. *Shopping in Space: Essays on American "Blank Generation" Fiction*. London: Serpent's Tail.
- Zinn, Maxine Baca, and D. Stanley Eitzen. 1987. *Diversity in American Families*. New York: Harper and Row.



“Maggot Maladies”: Origins of Horror as a Culturally Proscribed Entertainment

Sarah Cleary

INTRODUCTION

In February of 1797, just over one hundred years before the first horror film was shot, the poet Samuel Coleridge, in his review of Matthew Lewis’s controversial Gothic novel, *The Monk* (1789), wrote how

Mildness of censure would here be criminally misplaced and silence would make us accomplices. Not without reluctance then, but on full conviction that we are performing a duty, we declare it to be our opinion, that the monk [*sic*] is a romance, which if a parent saw in the hands of a son or daughter he might reasonably turn pale. (as cited in O’Malley 2006, p. 44)

Coleridge was not alone in his denunciation of the Gothic genre as a class of entertainment capable of corrupting the innocent child. Described as something akin to a “venereal disease,” or like a “virus [...] spreading in all directions,” certain eighteenth-century critics of the Gothic genre believed it somehow capable of “impressing young imaginations with gross improbabilities, unnatural horrors, and mysterious nonsense” (Franks 2008, p. 205; Mayo 1950, p. 789). Five years later in *The Monthly Review*, Charlotte Dacre’s supernatural novel, *Zofloya, or The Moor* (1806), was condemned as a “mode of impression which fills the mind of the juvenile reader with horrid ideas of supernatural agency, and makes him fancy like Macbeth, that he sees bloody spectres flitting before his eyes, and ensanguined dangers streaming in the air” (Kelsey 2009, p. 104).

S. Cleary (✉)
Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland

Apparently, “Curst” and full of “every Thing ytShdnot be anywhere,” [*sic*] (and “proscribed by the canons of good taste and morality,” the controversies surrounding early Gothic horror novels such as *The Monk* (1796), *Zofloya*, and perhaps the first true Gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), ultimately generated a historical precedent in terms of how sections of society would view material which went against the grain of acceptable entertainment (as cited in Balderston 1951, p. 969; Sage 1990, p. 12). Decried throughout the popular press as a nefarious influence on respectable readers, these texts seemed to crystallize a moment in horror’s torrid relationship with society’s guardians of moral order and decency. Anticipating centuries of criticism and controversy concerning the alleged harmful effects of horror on “vulnerable” sectors of society, these novels in particular seemed to pique the interest of both critics and the emerging middle-class reading public of the late eighteenth century for very different reasons. Though the scope of this chapter does not seek to provide a historical trajectory determining the development of the Gothic genre from its beginnings in German romance and seventeenth-century graveyard poetry, or present a comprehensive discussion of the manner in which the horror genre grew from Gothic literature, it does however provide an introductory account of the manner in which early Gothic horror texts set something of a precedent for later moral panics concerning the alleged negative effects of horror fiction (Townshend 2016).

Considered by its dissenters as a corrupting influence, the horror genre holds a unique place in society as a mainstream entertainment that is constantly under pressure to curb, suppress, and censor that which initially has made it so popular: its ability to disgust and to horrify. Yet, since its Gothic inception it has been targeted through a number of campaigns as a destructive and, ultimately, a harmful influence capable of somehow “infecting” or “corrupting” those it comes into contact with it. Due to the outcry generated by the popular penny dreadfuls of the nineteenth century, to the Payne Fund Studies of the 1930s, the Federal investigations into horror comics in 1954, to the formation of the Video Recordings Act (VRA) in 1984 in the UK there have been constant calls to restrict, regulate, and censor that which may have a “tendency to deprave and corrupt, or make morally bad, a significant proportion of the *likely* audience” (BBFC 2010). Alighting upon Joseph Crawford’s construct of “the terrible book,” to negotiate the manner in which certain texts throughout history have been loaded with cultural, political, and moral dysphoria, it is clear that horror has birthed some of the most “terrible books” of them all (Crawford 2015, p. 35). Containing things “so awful that only the wise and strong of heart could read [...] without damaging their minds and souls,” in an effort to perhaps offer some assistance in uncovering the malfeasance and various perversions society keeps hidden, these texts are ironically charged with generating such socially proscribed activity (p. 35).

For example, Bret Easton Ellis’s *American Psycho* (1991) was considered one such terrible book. Not only banned outright in Australia and forced to carry over eighteen warnings, so allegedly dangerous was this book, for fear its con-

taminant would seep out on to an unsuspecting consumer, the novel was sold shrink-wrapped. Bemused by the controversy, Ellis simply stated, “I was writing about a society in which the surface became the only thing. Everything was surface—food, clothes—that is what defined people” (Ellis 1991). More recently, in 2014, another fictional monster became embroiled within one of America’s most high-profile attempted murder cases of the twenty-first century. Having named the Internet meme Slender Man as motive, on the 31st of May 2014, twelve-year-old Morgan Geyser and Anissa Weier repeatedly stabbed their best friend, Payton Leutner (also twelve). Within days of the Wisconsin case breaking, both online horror fiction forums and the Internet in its entirety were framed within a narrative of harm. While admittedly highlighting the fictionality of Slender Man, the media sought to emphasize the role an Internet meme played in the lives of, what appears to be, two very disturbed girls and not the more complex issue of mental illness in children. Emphasizing the fictionality of the Slender Man universe, a Creepypasta administrator posted a statement on their page, offering condolences to the family while simultaneously defending its position: “There is a line between fiction and reality, and it is up to you to realize where the line is. We are a literature site, not a crazy satanic cult” (Bee 2014). Yet, the fact that, in the twenty-first century, this correlation between horror fiction and harm or “negative effects” is as ubiquitous as ever leads one to question whether what exactly it is we fear about these texts?

GOTHIC ORIGINS

As monstrous as the ghouls and varmints of its creation, the horror genre has been in a state of mutation since its Gothic origins in the late eighteenth century. While it is fair to say that humankind has reveled in terrifying her fellow human since time immemorial, Gothic literature, seen as something of a rebuke to the rationalism of the Enlightenment period, seemed to hydrolyze the more inarticulate and evasive aspects of the human condition. Infused with elegiac sentiment, these threnodial tales were similarly suffused with both ontological and epistemological inquiry into life and the circumstances surrounding its end. “The gothic was not merely a playground for the imaginative,” notes Clive Bloom, “it was also the very foundation of a new sense of the imagination. It was not merely a set of exterior devices through which to have cozy inglenook adventures, but a mechanism for describing not only the workings of the mind, but also the mind in relationship with the supernatural, the universal and the divine” (Bloom 2010, p. 4). As Bloom continues, the Gothic was a literacy form that negotiates in the “unspoken, the difficult and painful like no other form of art could do” (p. 4). As the Gothic became more of a literary device for uprooting the organized structure of the proponents of the Enlightenment period, Martin Myrone continues:

The first half of the eighteenth-century saw the transformation of the nature of literary criticism and the aesthetic discourse- with a growing middle-class audience

for culture, the rather rarefied old standards of taste and judgement, hide-bound to classical values, were examined anew. With this re-examination came a new appreciation of the possibilities of horror and the supernatural. (Myrone 2006, p. 114)

The Gothic was, thus, seen not only as a narrative aesthetic but also as a political, psychological, and sociological method of discourse, becoming eventually embroiled within “a more theoretical complex project [of] the representation of the fragmented subjectivity” (Mills 1993, p. 2). However, the imbrication of the supernatural and subjectivity for many during the eighteenth century was a dangerous and destabilizing intrusion into the pastimes of the young and respectable.

With contemporary debates still circulating in regard to the efficacy of negative effects of research into horror films, video games, and online digital horror fiction, it is interesting to trace similar controversies concerning the horror genre and the “shock of the new” over the past back over two hundred years (Barker and Petley 2001; Crawford 2015). That said, before we move any further at this point, it is preferable to pause momentarily, in order to determine, however briefly, the manner in which the destabilizing effects of Gothic excess gave rise to the more visceral horror genre, to which modern audiences are now accustomed. Regrettably, such an investigation is at odds with the scope of this chapter (Bloom 2010). Instead, this exploration is more concerned with the “turn” in Gothic fiction, which facilitated the tenets of horror fiction to proliferate throughout the nineteenth century, leading to over centuries of regulation, restriction, and censorship. While it is important to note that twenty-first-century criticism within Gothic Studies has ushered in a welcome period of fresh appraisal concerning the contextualization of the Gothic removed from its typical literary remit, thus expanding and acknowledging the Gothic as a genre and cultural perspective simultaneously, for the purposes of this chapter, the Gothic will champion its more singular incantation as a literary mode.

As a point of departure, it is interesting to note that, in tandem with a growing taste in Gothic fiction, horror was frequently maligned among critics in favor of a more cerebral and transcendent experience of terror. Seeking to parse the lines between the experiences of terror and horror, Fred Botting (1996) cites the eighteenth-century author Ann Radcliffe, whose meditations on Burke’s treatise on the sublime, offered an interesting perspective on the difference between terror as generated by the Gothic and horror, a somatic reaction to a more visceral aesthetic. “Terror and horror,” Radcliffe wrote, “are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a higher degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them” (as cited in Botting 1996, p. 74). While terror implies possible liberation from that which causes such fear, horror traps its subject, “rendering the mind passive and immobilizing the body” (Botting 1996, p. 75). Horror, argues Botting, “marks the response to an excess that cannot be transcended” (p. 75). Equipped with nostalgic inheritance of deriving pleasure from what Anna Laetitia Barbauld

defined in her landmark 1773 essay as “objects of terror,” horror, thus, became embroiled within contemporary “medical conditions garnered from contemporary popular encyclopedia” and developed a new visceral genre steeped in horrific imagery and psychological dysfunction (as cited in Clery and Miles 2000, p. 127; Bloom 2007, p. 3). Terror gave the impression that the worst was just around the corner—horror confirmed that fear. Similarly describing the distinction between terror and horror, Devendra Varma astutely summarized that the difference between “awful apprehension and sickening realization: between the smell of death and stumbling against a corpse” (Varma 1966 p. 130). Having stumbled around, in the graveyard poetry of the seventeenth-century Gothic literature, was about to confront that corpse for the very first time in 1769.

THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO

Widely recognized as the first of its kind, from its initial publication, *The Castle of Otranto* simultaneously captured the public’s imagination and offended the mire of more delicate sensibilities. Based on a dream at “Strawberry Hill,” his mansion devoted to historical Gothic architecture, Walpole’s oneirocritical narrative concerns the intricacies of complex familial affairs which revolve around the Castle of Otranto, involving murder, ghosts, and threats of rape. Steeped in artifice and excess, the novel was initially published anonymously, where, as the preface explained, the following pages were not fiction but, indeed, a recently discovered manuscript of eleventh-century medieval romance. While the following edition did confess that this “Gothic Story” was indeed a work of fiction, the fact that he had framed his original text in such a manner not only complimented much of the popular literature at the time in which “overt” frames of authenticity obscured “covert” frames of fictionality, but it also served as a narrative device destabilizing the reader (Cooper 2010, p. 27; Davis 1983, p. 21). Similar to buzz generated within the opening weeks of the found-footage horror *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) surrounding the film’s authenticity, such framing (and, let it be said, marketing) devices create “uncertainty about the boundary between fiction and reality” (Cooper, p. 26). The aim of this “trick,” Cooper claims, is to locate the reader in a place of “epistemological uncertainty that destabilizes the perception of ‘reality’ itself” (p. 26).

Serving a dual purpose, locating his narrative in the distant past of 1059 allowed Walpole to invoke both the narrative stylings of medieval romance while exonerating himself from producing such an exaggerated plot within the Enlightenment period when Neoclassicism, or “a preference for rationality, clarity, restraint, order, and decorum, and for general truths rather than particular insights,” was in vogue (Baldick 2001, p. 168). Establishing “a manifesto for a new kind of writing,” while unleashing both “real and imagined terrors,” Walpole apologized to his readers, some of whom, after reading the first edition, believed the story to have been a translation of a much earlier (real-life) Italian text (Watt 1999, p. 12; Davison 2009, p. 63). Defending his stylistic mergers however, Walpole continued:

It was an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance: the ancient and the modern. In the former, all was imagination and improbability; in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been, copied with success. Invention has not been wanting; but the great resources of fancy have been dammed up, by a strict adherence to common life. (Walpole 2007, p. 27)

While the novel may have been immensely popular, it was also a primary target of ridicule among Gothic detractors. Wary of the novel's hyperbolic use of avarice "abounding with false provocation of enchantment and prodigies," critics feared that Walpole had paved the way for a "monstrous progeny of Gothic novels" (Varma 1966, p. 12; Honour 1957, p. 19). Anticipating the backlash against Matthew Lewis, *The Monthly Review* initially admired the first anonymous edition. However, upon reviewing the second edition, the paper recanted its praise. In its place, it offered a scathing rebuke to the author for encouraging a "Gothic Devilism":

It is, indeed, more than strange, that an Author [sic] of a refined and polished genius, should be an advocate for re-establishing the barbarous superstitions of *Gothic Devilism!* *Incredulusodi* is, or ought to be a charm against all such infatuation. Under the same banner of singularity, he attempts to defend such *trash* of Shakespeare, and what that great genius evidently threw out as necessary sacrifice to that idol of *caecum vulgus* he would adopt in the worship of the true God of Poetry. (as cited in Copper, pp. 26–27)

In spite of such criticism, however, the idea that the Gothic could be incorporated within social and political commentary was gaining traction among certain authors wishing to express their dissatisfaction with the current state of world affairs. Especially pertinent to this debate was the manner in which the tremendous social, political, and cultural upheavals caused by the French Revolution (1789–1799) could be articulated and indeed comprehended. Contrary to everything the Enlightenment period had stood for, the violent and bloody revolution that took place in France devastated traditional, political, and social values. Unnerved by the violence and unable to fathom the enormity of the situation, many authors turned to the Gothic language of terror as a way of interpreting such violence. Furthering this notion, Walpole wrote in 1793, "it remained for the enlightened eighteenth-century to baffle language and invent horrors that can be found in no vocabulary" (Davison 2009, p. 111). Most notably and controversially, Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* was the quintessential work that was to incorporate these very fears (Paulson 1983, p. 220). In a rare defense of *The Monk*, titled "An Apology for The Monk," published in *The Monthly Mirror* in 1797, the anonymous author argues:

[...] Nor is it true in general that moral truth cannot be conveyed in romance. The general sense of mankind is against the critics in this ascertain. From the earliest ages fiction and incredible fiction, has been thought a proper vehicle for moral instruction, for the fables of Aesop, to the tales, allegories, and visions of modern days. (as cited in Clery and Miles 2000, p. 194)

Similarly indorsing Lewis as an author who epitomized this physical turmoil throughout Europe within his work, fellow provocateur the Marquis de Sade wrote, in his 1800 essay, “The Fruit of Revolutionary Tremors”:

For anyone who was familiar with the extent of the miseries that evil men were able to heap upon mankind, the novel became as difficult to write as it was monotonous to read. [...] In order therefore to confer some interest on their production it was necessary to appeal to hell for aid to find chimeras in the landscape: a thing which one perceived at the time by a mere glance through the history of mankind in this age of iron. (as cited in Sage 1990, p. 49)

And it was quite literally to hell that Lewis happily took his readers.

THE MONK

Heralded by Sade as the “most accomplished Gothic novel ever written,” the Scottish author and poet, Sir Walter Scott, professed that the notoriety surrounding *The Monk* created something of a decisive “epoch” in literature (as cited in Davison, p. 137). Revolving around a primary plot and a series of subplots concerned with budding unrequited romances between various protagonists, the three-volume novel concerned the venerated and pious monk, Ambrosio, and his lust-driven fall from grace. Discovering that one of his admirers, a young monk named Rosario, is in fact a woman called Matilda who has undergone the guise of a young boy to be close to her beloved, Ambrosio is overcome with and embarks upon a passionate affair. No longer able to contain his passions, he becomes insatiable. Propelled into a downward spiral of moral decay, accelerated by the incest, rape, and murder, Ambrosio sells his soul to the devil in return for his freedom.

While Lewis’s assault on both the hypocrisy of the church and ineptitude of the state forms the most trenchant narrative propellant, he also favors imagery steeped in visceral horror. For any generation to read the wretched depiction of the emaciated Agnes cradling her stillborn infant in the filth of the catacombs is harrowing, but when read through late eighteenth-century sensibilities, loaded with anti-Catholic contempt, it makes for a very potent read. Describing her pitiful state, Agnes laments:

Often have I at waking found my fingers ringed with the long worms, which bred in the corrupted flesh of my Infant. At such times I shrieked with terror and disgust, and while I shook off the reptile, trembled with all a Women’s weakness. (Lewis 2008, p. 415)

Two hundred years later, images of a deformed dead baby were to prove just as controversial and upsetting. In an *X-Files* episode, entitled “Home,” censors at FOX network found the images so disturbing they initially bestowed upon it, a “viewer discretion warning for graphic content” and ultimately banned the Network from repeat showings. Evocative of Bloom’s reading of the Gothic, Xavier Aldana Reyes writes that horror fiction

channels social fears, it also allows for a representation of how we should respond to and manage them: are fears and evil to be embraced or else contained, where they cannot be eradicated? While there may be a conservative or reactionary streak to horror fiction, insofar as it sometimes restores the status quo and expels the transgressive, it is equally possible to conceive of horror as attractive and capable of holding our fascination because it enables readers to interrogate the limits of what is socially acceptable, the boundaries the boundaries imposed by decorum and “good taste.” According to this view, horror is not exciting because it is illicit, but because it dares to go where other sanctioned literature does not. (Aldana Reyes 2016, p. 8)

Received with mixed reactions upon its initial publication on the 12th of March 1796, similar to *The Castle of Otranto*, Lewis opted to initially publish anonymously. Describing the novel as “most masterly,” *The Monthly Mirror* claimed it could not remember having read “a more interesting production” (as cited in Macdonald 2000, p. 129). Less enthusiastic, the more conservative *The British Critic* wrote, “Lust murder, incest and every atrocity that can disgrace human nature brought together, without the apology of probability, or even possibility, for their introduction” (as cited in Steedman 2013, p. 36). Interestingly, the paper also added, albeit with some reluctance, that the author, “in many parts pernicious” was “not without marks of genius.” Ultimately the novel was upon its first publication assigned an inconsequential role in the emerging “terrible school” for “hobgoblin-romance” and was indeed generally allowed its grotesque dalliances (Davison 2009 p. 24). That is until Lewis attached his name and, more importantly, his title to it on its second publication on the 14th of September 1797. Once news had reached the higher echelons of society that the author of the “pernicious” novel, *The Monk*, was not of the weaker sex, but a member of parliament with strong familial links to high society, the novel was judged from very different perspective.

Retracting their initial praise for the novel, *The British Critic* offered their justifications for *not* condemning the novel upon its original publication duplicitously, claiming, “When we gave our critique upon it [*The Monk*] what we said was concise though strong, because we feared attracting attention to a production so pernicious, even by our censures” (as cited in Lanzen-Harris 2004, p. 196). In an appendage to this apology a year later, the *Critic* added, “Had we written upon it at a later period, when its circulation was unhappily established, we should have sought the strongest words we could collect, to express our disapprobation and abhorrence” (as cited in Watt 1999, p. 94). Noting the embarrassment toward the papers’ retractions, Parreaux observes that the reviewer must recant due to his lack of perception toward any “trace of immorality in the book” that was conveniently discovered only *after* “the title of the writer was known to him” (Parreaux 1960, p. 89). Following suit, papers immediately began to condemn the novel for its “obscurity,” which, according to *The Monthly Review*, made it “totally unfit for general circulation” (Watt, p. 94). Anticipating the backlash against mid-nineteenth-century

Sensation fiction, while additionally echoing the eighteenth-century gynecological concerns of de Bienville, reviewers were horrified that the "gentler of sexes" (women) would find themselves in a "state of perturbation and impairment" after reading such shameless and audacious material (as cited in Parreaux, p. 76). In the essay, "On Novels and Romances," published in the *Scots Magazine*, a certain W.W. quote patronizingly wrote of women reading novels such as *The Monk*:

But without wishing to insinuate, that the minds of the fair are naturally more light and unstable than our own, it must be observed, they are the principle support of writings of this kind; and that it is the encouragement they afford, which has given confidence to many a young author, not a few whom are indeed, females, to thrust their literary bantlings into the world, in the belief that they would amuse, and inform, the idle and uninitiated.[...] Besides generating imbecility of mind, the sensibility of readers of novels, it will likewise be observed, is easily awakened, and the tear of sympathy quickly afforded to an imaginary tale of woe, while, it is probable, to a scene of real distress, if it comes not attended with circumstances similar to those related in a romance, pity is denied as they know not how to compassionate what appears to them to be vulgar sufferings. Such is the effect of these false representations of life produce on weak youthful minds. (as cited in Clery and Miles 2000, p. 211)

The "weak and youthful minds" argument, which has been previously mentioned, really began to pick up serious momentum as greater numbers of young women were becoming literate at the turn of the century, thus facilitating these "vulgar sufferings." Toward the end of his essay, the author posits that Lewis's novel is *the* quintessential text that harbors *all* those "faults and immoralities," claiming it a "story so indelicate and improper—so improbable and abhorrent" (Clery and Miles 2000, p. 211). Confused as to how a Member of Parliament could have debased himself in such a way, the conservative author, Thomas Mathias, wrote in his renowned satirical poem, *The Pursuits of Literature*, of his outrage and despondency toward the revelation:

But we can feel that it is an object of moral and national reprehension, when a Senator openly and daringly violates his first duty to his country. There are wounds and obstructions and diseases in the political, as well as the national body, for which the removal of the part affected is alone efficacious. At an hour like this, are we to stand in consultation on the remedy, when not the disease is ascertained, but the very stage of the disease, and its specific symptoms? (Norton 2005, p. 293)

Conceivably, the most hostile of reviews toward the author were received from Samuel Coleridge. To say nothing of the charges of blasphemy that Coleridge leveled at Lewis, a crucial grievance of the poet was the potential moral decline of Lewis's younger readership. Asserting that "Mildness of censure would here be criminally misplaced and silence would make us accomplices," Coleridge continues that it is "Not without reluctance then, but on full conviction that

we are performing a duty, we declare it to be our opinion, that the monk is a romance, which if a parent saw in the hands of a son or daughter he might reasonably turn pale” (as cited in Wright 2007, p. 16). Maintaining this line of moral decline, he professed:

The sufferings which he [Lewis] describes are so frightful and intolerable, that we break with abruptness from the delusion, and indignantly suspect the man of a species of brutality, who could find a pleasure in wantonly imagining them; and the abominations which he pourtrays [sic] with no hurrying pencil, are such as the observation of character by no means demanded, such as ‘no observation of character can justify, because no good man would willingly suffer them to pass, however transiently, through his own mind. (as cited in Wright 2007, p. 16)

Interestingly, Coleridge seems at times more sympathetic toward the author, praising his expert use of imaginative weave of plots and subplots, noting that “The whole work is distinguished by the variety and impressiveness of its incidents; and the author everywhere discovers an imagination rich, powerful, and fervid” (as cited in Wright 2007, p. 16). Yet, the overall tone of the review is one of aversion and contempt. Because of these continued assaults upon his character and a growing alienation from his family, Lewis wrote a fourth edition of the novel, expunging it of any offensive material. Writing to his estranged father in 1798, the young writer lamented:

Twenty is not the age at which prudence is most to be expected. Inexperience prevented my distinguishing what should give offence; but as soon as I found that offence was given, I made the only reparation in my power: I carefully revised the work, and expunged every syllable on which could be grounded the slightest construction of immorality. This, indeed, was no difficult task, for the objection rested entirely on expressions too strong, and words carelessly chosen; not on the sentiments, characters, or general tendency of the work. (as cited in Bloom 1994, p. 64)

And, because of this new innocuous self-censored edition, Lewis was somewhat excused publicly. Ambrosio became simply a betrayer of trust, a symbol for uncontrollable passions, instead of an actual incarnate of evil, and all references that may cause concern were revised.

Nevertheless, there were a handful of critics who were willing to defend Lewis publicly. In a letter written April 1797 to *The Monthly Mirror* titled “A Friend to Genius, An Apology for *The Monk*,” the author highlights the merits of Lewis in his use of vice as a means for didactic interpretation and not solely a source for titillation. He writes:

The lessons of virtue which I see in *The Monk*, are striking and impressive. In the character of Ambrosio we see a man delineated of strong passions, which have been for a long period subdued by as strong resolution; of as natured disposition to virtue, but, like all other men, with some portion of vice, which has been fostered by the situation into which his fate had thrown him; he is haughty, vindictive, and austere. (as cited in Clery and Miles 2000, p. 192)

The author of the letter clearly believed Lewis was justified in his portrayal of vice as a debased yet an inherent component of humanity in his novel. John Dunlop wrote in 1814 of novels in general, and *The Monk* in particular, that “The general tendency, too of all these terrific works is virtuous.” He continues positing the idea of virtue within vice, citing habitual tropes and characters found within authors such as Lewis and, indeed, de Sade:

The wicked marquis or the villainous Monk meet at length the punishment they deserve, while the happy heroine, undisturbed by hobgoblins, or the illusions created by the creaking of doors, sobbing of the wind, or partial gleams of light discovers at length that the terrific castle, or mouldering abbey, in which she had been alarmed or tormented is part of her own domain, and enjoys in connubial happiness the extensive property of which she had unjustly been deprived. (as cited in Clery and Miles 2000, p. 220)

Again, pre-empting twentieth-century debates on the effect of horror fiction on the young and especially female reader, Dunlop asks of readers to use their own powers of observation to divorce any notions of similarity that they may have between reality and fiction, while still retaining a greater understanding of what the novel is trying to articulate through enlightening imagery. As a side note, Dunlop impishly wishes to posit the superior uses of Gothic hyperbole as a means of relaxation, stating, “All this may be very absurd, but life perhaps has better things better [sic] than sitting at the chimney-corner I a winter evening, after a well-spent day reading such absurdities [...]” (as cited in Clery and Miles 2000, p. 220). Published four years before the death of Lewis, it did very little to dispel any of the controversy surrounding his name. Lewis was never to recover from the infamy that his debut novel created. Though prosecution on the grounds of his blasphemy was never actually executed, Lewis the author and M.P. was never considered fit for public office.

Even in death, the sustained attack on Lewis continued. In an informal obituary in 1818, the *Courier* quite harshly wrote:

He was a reckless defiler of the public mind; a profligate, he cared not how many were to be undone when he drew back the curtain of his profligacy; he had infected his reason with the insolent belief that the power to corrupt made the right, and that conscience might be laughed, so long as he could evade law. *The Monk* was an eloquent evil; but the man who compounded it knew in his soul that he was compounding poison for the multitude, and in that knowledge he sent it into the world. (as cited in Macdonald 2000, p. 74)

Ironically, after the fourth languid edition of the novel was published and all previous editions recalled for disposal, there was a surge in interest for the procurement of the more notorious editions. Often enthralled by that which disgusts, individuals equally find themselves ensnared by that which is forbidden.

The Monk would never in Lewis’s lifetime achieve any modicum of respect, and it was left for his own self-censorship on the fourth edition to rectify the

issues that critics publicly denounced. In a letter, apologizing for any harm he may have caused through the perceived contempt he had for the Bible, Lewis is also quick to point out that his intention throughout was not to offend but rather to proffer a degree of “advice” throughout the text.

Without entering into the discussion, whether the principles inculcated in *The Monk* are right or wrong, or whether the means by which the story is conducted is likely to do more mischief than the tendency is likely to produce good, I solemnly declare, that when I published the work I had no idea that its publication could be prejudicial; if I was wrong, the error proceeded from my judgment, not from my intention. Without entering into the merits of the advice which it proposes to convey, or attempting to defend (what I now condemn myself) the language and manner in which that advice was delivered, I solemnly declare, that in writing the passage which regards the Bible (consisting of a single page, and the only passage which I ever wrote on the subject) I had not the most distant intention to bring the sacred Writings into contempt, and that, had I suspected it of producing such an effect, I should not have written the paragraph. (as cited in Peck 1961, p. 36)

Considering the tumultuous environment in which *The Monk* was conceived, it was very much a text of its time. Lewis used the Gothic for its “deliberate archaism,” as an embedded platform to expose multiple “cultural and political reflexes,” not assessable to other “realist” genres (Sage 1990, p. 17). These authors used the transgressive and subversive, veiling and unveiling nature of the Gothic horror genre to openly discuss controversial issues, such as man’s inhumanity as witnessed throughout the French Revolution, sexual perversion, political corruption, religious hypocrisy, even homosexuality observed through the transvestism of Lewis’s Rosario character. While the fires of this hell the likes of which Sade and Lewis spoke seemed to proffer an opportunity to explore man’s inhumanity to man as accentuated throughout the Revolution and in the subsequent Reign of Terror (1793–1794), a more covert Revolution of sorts was taking place within the pages of Gothic horror. Mad, bad, and sad, women began to take a more active role, imbued with agency within the horror-scape of nineteenth-century literature, much to the disdain of their critics.

ZOFLOYA, OR THE MOOR

Unique in its portrayal of gender and race, Charlotte Dacre’s explicit exploration of women’s sexual desire and subjectivity was unprecedented in both the Gothic tradition and contemporary nineteenth-century literature. As Kellie Donovan-Condrón notes, Gothic heroines at this time were typically subject to the whims of their oppressors, “trapped, literally or metaphorically, by patriarchal social structures that control whom they should desire as a means of controlling their economic and legal rights” (Donovan-Condrón 2013, p. 685).

By contrast, Victoria is not only a woman of means, but, in controlling her own wealth, Victoria also exercises a degree of control over her own sexuality, regardless of how perverse that sexuality is depicted. In a similar path to ruin, Victoria's actions echo those of Lewis's monk as they both seek to fulfill their desires at any cost. Far from the meek Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* or Ellena di Rosalba of *The Italian*, the bold Victoria is in control of not only her destiny but also her fall from grace.

Of course, the most problematic of these taboos was the very notion that Victoria had a sexuality worth exploring. Exploring female sexuality devoid of its reproductive implications or rape undertones, Dacre's character was considered a more transgressive creature than that of Lewis's monk. As Sally Shuttleworth observes, "maternity encompassed the domain of female sexuality, for all the works of female sexual desire were traced directly to the operation of the reproductive system" (Shuttleworth 2012, p. 32). Isolating Victoria's sexuality imbued her with monstrous implications. Anticipating Mary Shelley's own controversial monster just under two decades later, whom she created out of an amalgamation of sexual, political, and social anxieties and fused from the "chaos" she herself observed around her, Dacre created her own monstrous progeny in Victoria. In an analogous narrative, she has no other option but to similarly destroy her creation.

While the novel itself proved quite popular, having been compressed into a "chapbook" in August 1810 under the title *The Demon of Venice. An Original Romance by a Lady*, Dacre's critics failed to see how this "exhibition of wantonness and harlotry" could have any positive moral or didactic influence over a reader. Noting with supreme disapproval the close comparison between *Zofloya* and *The Monk*, *The Annual Review* remarked, "If we are not deceived in our judgment, both the style and the story of 'Zofloya', are formed on the *chaste* model of Mr Lewis 'Monk:' at any rate there is sufficient similitude to warrant suspicion"[sic] (as cited in Craciun 2003, p. 146). The mere mention of Lewis's novel in conjunction with another novel immediately put the latter into a *certain* category of writing that was to be avoided at all costs. However, while the text is repeatedly aligned with the impropriety of *The Monk*, the most severe transgression committed by the author of *Zofloya* was in fact her brazened defiance of gender norms.

Lamenting how "the 'Monk' [sic] seems to have been made the model, as well as the style of the story," *The Annual Review* alights upon Dacre's double transgression as not only an author influenced by the contemptible Lewis but also a *female* author capable of such "wantonness and harlotry":

There is a voluptuousness of language and allusion, pervading these volumes, which we should have hoped, that the delicacy of a female pen would have refused to trace; and there is an exhibition of wantonness and harlotry, which we should have hoped that the delicacy of the female mind would have been too shocked to imagine. (as cited in Faxneld 2017, p. 168)

“[A]fflicted with the dismal malady of maggots in the brain,” the *Literary Journal* in 1806, proliferating the soon to be stock metaphor of the dangerous virus, wished to expose how Dacre was not only appealing to the lowest common denominator in her literature but also “infecting” her fellow hapless female readers who had fallen prey to her disease.

Ladies of her description [...] have the seed of nonsense, bad taste, and ridiculous fancies early sown in their minds. These having grown to maturity render the brain putrid and corrupt, and the consequence is the formation of millions of the strangest maggots that one can conceive [...] That our fair authoress is afflicted with the dismal malady of maggots in the brain is, alas, but too apparent, from the whole of her production [...] This malady of maggots is rendered more dreadful by its being infectious [...] It might be a charitable thing to have a hospital for the reception of these unfortunate people while under the influence of the disease [...]. (as cited in Kelsey 2009, p. 104)

Drawing similar rebuke, reviews for Shelley’s *Frankenstein* were likewise pathologized, whereupon the “wearied reader after a struggle between laughter and loathing in doubt whether the head or the heart of the author be the most diseased” (as cited in Colavito 2012, p. 92).

In Dacre’s castigation of her heroine, various problematic conclusions are drawn in reference to her credibility as a “celebrated proto-feminist” of early horror literature. Davison marks this conclusion as something of a retreat from her pervious and courageous stand as feminist author, calling into question the fact that Dacre, “Finally brings Victoria to heel in this anti-conduct guide,” and, though Victoria’s punishment is extreme, so, too, the novel claims, were her actions (Davison 2009, p. 157). Her tabooed relationships, carnal desires, and jealousies contribute to the immoral actions of a woman who must be admonished, thus restoring order. An argument could be made, however, that points to Dacre’s use of the patriarchy in which she must operate. Thus, in the severe punishment of Victoria, Dacre draws attention to the only available narrative in which she could explore female sexuality, albeit within the confines of an oppressive male framework. In doing so, Dacre also anticipates a period within the literary Gothic during the mid-nineteenth century in which Sensation fiction afforded authors such as Ellen (Mrs. Henry) Wood and Mary Elizabeth Braddon opportunities to explore the pathologized female body within the context of the patriarchal system they inhabited.

CONCLUSION

Consistently depicting all manner of abject and horrifying representations across its broad spectrum of mediums, the horror genre is only capable of reflecting the immorality of the world and not generating it. And, while binary opposites of both good and bad coexist side by side in everyday life, furnishing the horror genre within infinite possibilities for representation, as Oscar Wilde

once decried while standing in the dock defending his work, "there is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all" (Wilde 1994, p. 5). However, it appears, counter to Wilde's brave stance, that is, unfortunately, not all. From its Gothic inception right up to the present day, horror fiction, in this case literary horror specifically, has been under attack from many diverse fractions as a corrupting influence that holds a unique place in society as a mainstream form of entertainment, which is constantly under pressure to curb, suppress, and censor that which has initially made it so popular: its ability to disgust, horrify, and, dare we say, destabilize the status quo.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aldana Reyes, Xavier. 2016. Introduction. In *Horror: A Literary History*, ed. Xavier Aldana Reyes, 7–17. London: British Library.
- Balderston, K.C., ed. 1951. *Thraliana. The Diary of Mrs Hester Lynch Thrale (Later Mrs. Piozzi) 1776–1809*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baldick, Chris. 2001. *Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Barker, M., and J. Petley, eds. 2001. *Ill Effects. The Media/Violence Debate*. New York: Routledge.
- BBFC: British Board of Film Classification. 2010. Video Recordings Act. <http://www.bbfc.co.uk/education-resources/student-guide/legislation/video-recordings-act>. Accessed June 10, 2017.
- Bee, Trisha. 2014. Creepypasta Responds: 'We are a literature Site, Not a Crazy Satanic Cult'. *Fox6Now*, June 3. <http://fox6now.com/2014/06/03/creepypasta-responds-we-are-a-literature-site-not-a-crazy-satanic-cult/>. Accessed August 28, 2015.
- Bloom, Harold. 1994. *Classic Horror Writers*. New York: Chelsea House Publishing.
- Bloom, Clive. 2007. Introduction. In *Gothic Horror: A Guide for Students and Readers*, ed. Clive Bloom, 1–24. New York: Routledge.
- . 2010. *Gothic Histories: The Taste for Terror, 1764 to the Present*. New York: Continuum.
- Botting, Fred. 1996. *Gothic. A New Critical Idiom*. New York: Routledge.
- Clery, E.J., and Robert Miles. 2000. *Gothic Documents. A Sourcebook 1700–1820*. New York: Manchester University Press.
- Colavito, Jason. 2012. *"A Hideous Bit of Morbidity": An Anthology of Horror Criticism from the Enlightenment to World War I*. North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc.
- Cooper, L. Andrew. 2010. *Gothic Realities. The Impact of Horror Fiction on Modern Culture*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc.
- Craciun, Adriana. 2003. *Fatal Women of Romanticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crawford, Joseph. 2015. Gothic Fiction and the Evolution of Media Technology. In *Technologies of the Gothic in Literature and Culture*, ed. Justin D. Edwards, 36–47. New York: Routledge.
- Davis, Lennard J. 1983. *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Davison, Carol Margaret. 2009. *History of Gothic Literature 1764–1824*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Donovan-Condron, Kellie. 2013. Urban Gothic in Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*. *European Romantic Review* 24 (6): 683–697.
- Ellis, Bret Easton. 1991. Bret Easton Ellis Answers Critics of American Psycho. *New York Times*, March 6. <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/03/06/books/bret-easton-ellis-answers-critics-of-american-psycho.html?pagewanted=all>. Accessed December 4, 2017.
- Faxneld, Per. 2017. *Satanic Feminism: Lucifer as the Liberator of Woman in Nineteenth-century Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Franks, Fredrick S., ed. 2008. *The Castle of Otranto and the Mysterious Mother*. Peterborough: Broadview Press.
- Honour, Hugu. 1957. *Horace Walpole*. New York: Longmans, Green & Co.
- Kelsey, Jennifer C. 2009. *A Voice of Discontent: A Woman's Journey through the Long Eighteenth Century*. Leicester: Matador.
- Lanzen-Harris, Laurie. 2004. *Nineteenth-century Literature Criticism*. Vol. 132. Michigan: Gale Research Company.
- Lewis, Matthew. 2008. *The Monk*. Oxford: Oxford World Classics.
- Macdonald, David. 2000. *Monk Lewis: A Critical Biography*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated.
- Mayo, Robert D. 1950. Gothic Romance in the Magazines. *PMLA* 65 (5): 762–789.
- Mills, Robert. 1993. *Gothic Writing 1750–1820: A Genealogy*. London: Routledge.
- Myrone, Martin, ed. 2006. *The Gothic Reader*. Liverpool: Tate Publishing.
- Norton, Rictor, ed. 2005. *Gothic Readings: The First Wave, 1764–1840*. London: Leicester University Press.
- O'Malley, Patrick. 2006. *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Parreaux, Andre. 1960. *The Publication of The Monk: A Literary Event, 1796–1798*. Paris: Didier.
- Paulson, Ronald. 1983. *Representations of Revolution (1789–1820)*. London: Yale University Press.
- Peck, Louis. 1961. *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sage, Victor. 1990. *The Gothick Novel. Case Book*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Shuttleworth, Sally. 2012. Demonic Mothers. Ideologies of Bourgeois Motherhood in the Mid-Victorian Era. In *Rewriting the Victorians: Theory, History, and the Politics of Gender, Volume 12*, ed. Linda M. Shires, 31–51. Oxon: Routledge.
- Steedman, Carolyn. 2013. *An Everyday Life of the English Working Class: Work, Self and Sociability in the Early Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Townshend, Dale. 2016. Gothic and the Cultural Sources of Horror, 1740–1820. In *Horror: A Literary History*, ed. Xavier Aldana Reyes, 18–51. London: British Library.
- Varma, Devendra. 1966. *Gothic Flame. Being a History of the Gothic in England. Its Origins, Efflorescence, Disintegration and Residuary Influences*. London: Russel & Russel.
- Walpole, Horace. 2007. *The Castle of Otranto*. Gloucestershire: The History Press.
- Watt, James. 1999. *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict 1764–1832*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wilde, Oscar. 1994. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. London: Penguin Popular Classics.
- Wright, Angela. 2007. *Gothic Fiction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

The Mother of All Horrors: Medea's Infanticide in African American Literature

Christina Dokou

"When we have pleaded for understanding, our character has been distorted; when we have asked for simple caring, we have been handed empty inspirational appellations, then stuck in the farthest corner. When we have asked for love, we have been given children," says Alice Walker in "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens" about the black foremother, "the mule of the world," who suffered slavery and racism, "broken and forced to bear children (who were more often than not sold away from her)" (1994, pp. 405, 402, 403). The effects of slavery Walker describes form a case of what Freud calls "communal" or "social neuroses," in which a culture's distorted signifying mechanisms are not recognized as dysfunctional by the dominant majority, who have been raised to consider this situation "normal" and, thus, cannot or will not react to remedy it (1961b, p. 92). It would take, according to him, extraordinary powers to make the social malaise even apparent, let alone counter it. The powers of horror, perhaps?

I am, of course, alluding to Julia Kristeva's famous 1980 *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, which introduces the concept of the abject, the ultimate cultural horror, the "'something' that I do not recognize as a thing," associated with filth, defilement, vomited or unclean food, waste, and corpses (1982, pp. 2–3). The true source of all this revulsion and horror, according to Kristeva, is none other than the pre-Oedipal mother, from whom the developing child must part if s/he is to become an autonomous subject, a fear of "the archaic mother," which "turns out essentially to be fear of her generative power" (p. 77). Of course, (paleo)archaeology, myth analysis, and Jungian archetypal

C. Dokou (✉)

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece

psychology long ago established the connection of motherhood to death as deriving precisely from the primal image of the Great Mother as the Earth goddess, Gaia, Demeter, Cybele, Inanna, or Isis, as the “womb-tomb”: the “Nurturing Mother,” fertile source of all life and, simultaneously, the “Terrible Mother,” burial dirt or cave that ultimately possesses us all, otherwise known as the “Triple Goddess” motif of maiden-mother/lover-death crone.¹ Kristeva views the birth-bond similarly, as both the primal source of one’s sense of completeness and bliss, a state of undifferentiated symbiosis between mother and child that she calls “the Semiotic,” in opposition to the paternal/patriarchal “Symbolic,” but also as a potential stranglehold holding back the child from individuation (1984, p. 24). Therefore, she must be violently rejected by the growing child and be made into a symbol of horrid incestuous threat and monstrous ego annihilation. It is, however, a residual threat, as patriarchal civilization needs something against which to draw protective boundaries, and so the abject remains as “something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself from an object” (Kristeva 1982, p. 4). Against the clear dividers individuality needs, the abject confounds separation with a mother’s infuriating and meddling love-right: as Kristeva says, “It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection, but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (p. 4). Hence, motherhood, despite being glorified and idolized as female teleology by virtually every culture extant, indeed transforms by the exigencies of those selfsame cultures into “the mother” of all horrors—as well exemplified by the ultimate horror of the self-blinded, cursed, exiled Oedipus, the man who couldn’t leave his mother behind.

Yet when one confronts historically those cases of “social neuroses” Freud and Walker speak about, complications arise: what happens when an abject—in the sense of twisted, degrading, and tortuous—way of life comes in confrontation with the rival threat of an abject(ed) primal mother’s claim? This chapter examines three such cases in literature concerning mothers who, under the threat of slavery’s horrors, murder their own beloved children to spare them an abject life in bondage. It is these cases that allow the emergence of a horror even greater than the threat of the monstrous (incestuous) mother: not abjecting, but *being abjected*, by the mother while still in a state of dependence upon her. How great a horror that is for the infant, and how well it is imprinted in our individual and social psyches, is evinced in Freud’s famous “fort-da” study of the repetition compulsion as a way to deal with the fear of maternal abandonment: a psychic mechanism transcending even the pleasure principle (the mainstay of life) and directly linked to our primal agonies about self-preservation and our own death drive (1961a, pp. 9–10).²

Followers of Kristeva’s theory might, perhaps, object to such a twist on her original schema, noting that the very power of the maternal abject lies precisely in *our* need to reject it as a horrific and lurking threat to preserve our civilization and subjectivity. However, a recent study by Canadian nursing researchers Janet McCabe and Dave Holmes offers new support to what I originally

formulated as a theory drawn purely out of literature. The two investigated attitudes of new or expecting mothers whose offspring, thanks to advanced diagnostic “prenatal technologies,” were pronounced with some form of disability, concluding that prevalent “broader medical and social discourses ... that may glorify normalcy and pathologize the abnormal” led those mothers to “abject” their babies, either through “a literal abjection” by terminating pregnancy or metaphorically by emotionally rejecting or resenting them (McCabe and Holmes 2011, pp. 77, 79). What is important here, also, besides proof that abjection works both ways, is the way the researchers conflate social mandates for “normalcy” and the mother’s will toward what could well serve as an instance of Freud’s social neurosis:

What we propose is that there may be instances when the borders of the self are created before the child is able to develop their own boundaries. While this process continues to take place through abjection, it is the abject other that must be protected against; it is not the infant abjecting the mother, but rather the society abjecting the infant as other. (p. 79)

The Western prototype for this reversed abjecting relation can be traced to the classical figure of Medea, the infamous mythic princess, sorceress, and guardian of the Golden Fleece at Colchis, who turned infanticide when the Argonaut hero, Jason, with whom she had eloped, eventually abandoned her for a younger princess and access to the Corinthian throne. Although the infanticide does not appear on any other extant source besides Euripides’s 431 BCE play,³ it is this horrid version of Medea as a spite-driven negation of all that is feminine and motherly that has become iconic through the millennia—drawing, like Sophocles’s famous Oedipus, its appeal from the powers of horror that warn us to abject our mothers soon and definitively. Nevertheless, modern reinterpretations of the myth, from Jean Anouilh’s 1946 *Médée* to Cherrie Moraga’s 1995 *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea*,⁴ see in Medea a courageous, proud, and gifted foreign woman who reacts to her virtual bondage inside a racist Greek patriarchy and spares her beloved children from horrific exile or, at best, enslavement at the hands of the cruel Corinthians—if not from downright murder, as other discovered versions of her myth reveal.⁵ What surfaces is a motif in which the terrible and primal authority of a mother as a dealer of life *and* death is activated when external circumstances threaten her children with a fate worse than death, like the “disability” of exile or slavery. Exile, for the ancient Greeks, was a condition most abject, in which the person, seen purely as subject to the *polis*, was stripped of citizenship and property rights and was cast adrift outside their safe social structures. Hence, the only agent that could possibly gainsay this degradation by promoting the *human* rights of the subject over those of the citizen would be the mother, by virtue of her primary authority of biological derivation and bodily caring for a totally dependent infant. It is, accordingly, precisely on those terms that the exchange of lines between the Corinthian king Kreon and Medea, or Jason and Medea,

is built: Kreon stresses the good of his “own domain” (Euripides 1994, line 327).⁶ Jason invokes cold political logic and his superiority as a Greek citizen. Medea, instead, implores Kreon to “show pity; for you too are a father of children” and chides Jason for “betraying” the rights of love and family (lines 344–45, lines 488–95). Thus, eventually the murder of her children appears in comparison to slavery or exile as an act more natural—if still chilling precisely because of the emotional weight it is invested with—and Euripides not only shows Medea as a loving mother pushed to extreme despair by the arrogant intransigence of Kreon but also allows her many an eloquent justification of her position (lines 340–47). Accordingly, the play’s horrid culmination of infanticide is signified offstage by the two children’s cries as precisely a duel of abjections. The first son’s cry “Alas, what can I do? How do I escape my mother’s hand?” rings like an epigram for the traditionally viewed abjective motion, the escape from the Terrible Mother upon pain of death, but could also be interpreted as “how *could* I escape my mother’s hand?” suggesting an infant’s utter dependence on, and helplessness before, a maternal will suddenly turned fatal (line 1273). Indeed, the second son’s response, “I know not, brother dear; we are doomed,” confirms that utter dependence when the horror of motherly abjection is realized (line 1274). The act is sealed by the Chorus’s cry to Medea, chiding her for killing, by her own hand, those whom her own womb bore, thus confirming the perfect biological symmetry of her act: the expulsion of the child’s body in parturition is doubled monstrously, not by the re-insertion in the Oedipal womb, but by the further expulsion from, and inversion of, the maternal caring embrace (lines 1280–81). Most strikingly, immediately after Medea’s infanticide, the playwright in another innovation has her escape in a state touching upon apotheosis: she exits in a golden dragon-drawn chariot belonging to her grandfather, the god Helios, on her way to Athens, where she has secured sanctuary in exchange for a magic infertility treatment for the wife of the Athenian king Aegeus, the father of the greatest Athenian hero, Theseus (lines 1318–22). Before an Athenian audience, such a “patriotic” conclusion would aim to paint Medea as, inversely, a *bringer* of young life, since her magic is responsible for the birth of an impossible baby, but also as the clandestine source for the later heroic emancipation of Athens from the Minoan yoke signified by the incredible horror of the Minotaur, the monster Theseus slew.

Conditions similar to those of the classical Greek foreigner/exile are encountered in the long history of African American slaves, with an added element of racist ferocity that involved endless backbreaking labor, torture, rape, systematic dehumanization, mutilation, deprivation of hope, pride and family bonds, disease, madness, and death, steeped in all the accompanying abject fluids of blood, sweat, bile, pus, and tears. Especially for slave women, victims of both racism and sexism, the “preclusion from legally recognized and protected kinship bonds and the inability to generate reproductive futurity,” which twisted “the putatively natural or organic social ties of the slaves’ native society” while it conferred slave status only matrilineally, turned black motherhood into its horrid opposite, the unwilling purveyor of “one aspect of social death,” from which

literal death would be an escape (Balon 2015, p. 141). Thus, Jacinta van den Berg (2007) sees in the loving murder of the infants or their abortions an act of resistance coming from the weakest link in the slavery system. Women slaves bore the future generations of slaves for sale, and, in fact, as Jacqueline Jones says, the more loving and nurturing they were toward their children, the more the slave-master profited from that (1982, p. 238). What those mothers abjected, then, was not just children but also the perpetuation of a social neurosis; and, as van den Berg notes, they did it sometimes so successfully that entire colonies were wiped out (2007, p. 240). At the same time, Hortense Spillers's much-quoted study, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," shows how the lack of formal kinship status except for mother-conferred "blackness" created a stereotype of the black woman/mother as matriarchal, unusually tough in her heroic endurance—pathologically castrating even—and thrust to the forefront of the specter of the Terrible Mother (1987, p. 74). Ironically, as a slave mother was not allowed any legal claim upon her own children, they were also bereft of a primary semiotic self as generated in the *chora*: "[t]he destructive loss of the natural mother, whose biological/genetic relationship to the child remains unique and unambiguous, opens the enslaved young to social ambiguity and chaos" (p. 76). It is in this context that we must examine two fictional treatments of the same real-life incident concerning a "Modern Medea,"⁷ the escaped slave Margaret Garner, who murdered her infant girl (while attempting to kill all four of her small children) when faced with the prospect of capture under the Fugitive Slave Act in 1856. Ohio newspaper accounts of Garner's infanticide occasioned a poem, "The Slave Mother: A Tale of the Ohio,"⁸ penned at the heels of the incident by African American abolitionist Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, and, later, Toni Morrison's acclaimed 1987 novel, *Beloved*.⁹

Garner's act was not singular in the annals on African American slavery, as Countee Cullen's race-oriented adaptation of Euripides's material in his own *Medea* shows.¹⁰ As Leland Person remarks, "the most striking examples of maternal infanticide in nineteenth-century literature involve slave mothers killing (or sometimes simply abandoning) their children in order to save them from enslavement" (2001, p. 37). Terry Otten concurs that "infanticide was a common occurrence among slave mothers, at times in rage against malefic white fathers, at times in paradoxical acts of mercy directed toward their children" (1993, p. 657). What made this case into a "national scandal" was the publicity it gained, with Garner's trial challenging both the inhumanity of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and dominant stereotypes of motherhood (Farrar 2015, p. 56). Harper, who had lived in Ohio and was a member of the Underground Railroad network, had already been working at the forefront of both these issues as an immensely popular poet, essayist, novelist, and champion for the rights of women and black people, "[t]he most significant black woman poet of the century, and the only truly popular black American poet to precede Paul Laurence Dunbar" (Farrar 2015, p. 55). However, recognizing that the white suffragist agenda, with its "bourgeois values of domesticity," often ignored or misrepresented the particular needs of black women, Harper created "a complex account

of maternity” through “iconic slave mothers” that questioned the exclusionary politics of “the glorified status of Republican Motherhood in antebellum America” (O’Brien 2009, p. 617; Farrar 2015, p. 53).

Harper’s poem focuses exclusively on the mother’s psychology: the first line of the poem, “I have but four, the treasures of my soul,” establishes both ownership of the children and a verbal primacy of the mother that metonymically reflects her primal, semiotic status as the original “I,” in whose *chora* her offspring are included (Harper 1990, p. 84). The nineteenth-century sentimental ideology of the poem, in fact, aids this semiotic identification since, as seen by Glenn Hendler, “[s]entimental ideology imagines that ‘pure feeling’ can break down not only the boundaries between bodies, but also the distinctions between these other realms” of social categories (1999, p. 152). When she sees the bounty hunters approaching, the mother opts to “hew their path to freedom/through the portals of the tomb”, casting the deed as a desperate decision, but nevertheless a willful invocation of the womb-tomb prerogative by the loving/terrible mother reacting against the intolerable prospect of slavery (Harper 1990, p. 86). In her rhetorical flourishes, the mother seems to preordain, goddess-like, the grim fate of her children: she would consider her home “a joyous spot,” even in slavery, to “forget” her boys, whose “the darkness of their future lot” she personally predicts and “blend[s]” with their sunny childhood state and also “thinks” with a heart that “throbs wild” upon the doom of her “precious” baby daughter as if it were already complete (p. 84). Interestingly, the mother’s selfless concern for her children seems to suggest that they alone, and not her, are “disabled” by the abjection of slavery. However, the poem has already categorically placed the mother as a pariah in a context of social neurosis, by indicating that Ohio, contrary to “Judea’s refuge” and Rome’s “sacred fane,” offers no shelter to the persecuted (p. 85). The infanticide, therefore, is identified as, primarily, a socially abject act, not the result of some personal mental issue of an abject mother.

Critics have identified how Harper’s “race work” consistently uses maternal symbols, like the clandestine, lactating body of “a universal Black Mother” but also circularity and fluids (Sanborn 2005, p. 710; Badcock 2016). “The Slave Mother[’s]” infanticide is blended with features of the natural environment, like Ohio’s waters and the cycle of seasons, evoking the primal “Mother Nature” motif, as specifically measured against the un-natural institution of slavery. The—nameless, ergo pre-Symbolic—slave mother stands at a dividing line, the natural and legal border of the Ohio river between slavery and self-possession, but also between the savage, yet more “natural,” ethics of the mother desiring freedom and the so-called “Christian” morality of the American nation and its institutions. If we were to take at face value Harper’s blunder to have the murder knife glimmer dramatically “in the sunlight” when she has already established that “Winter and night were on the earth,” we see a fearful symmetry established: the hostile synaesthetic landscape of the iced Ohio echoes the “icy hands of slavery,” as if the deadening winter power of Mother Nature were also colluding to abject the precarious lives of the fugitives

(pp. 85–86). Simultaneously, such iciness contrasts with “the crimson fount of life” released by the blade, whose sunlight glimmer is nevertheless matched with the “sunshine mirth” of the innocent ones, as if pointing at a kind of “iced over” motherly love as complicit in the horrid act (pp. 86, 84). The abject(ed) blood is, therefore, only the nexus in a confusion of categories that eerily point to a willful abjection of those that should be nurtured and protected by their very protector (Mother/nature). In contrast to the conclusion that, “Representing the racialized and institutionalized abjection of the maternal body, the slave mother accordingly functions as sign and symbol of everything that her child must reject in order to achieve selfhood,” nowhere in the poem do the children seek to escape the mother, nor is there any blame cast upon her by the poetic voice that would paint her as an abject wretch (Dawkins 2009, p. 797). Instead, Harper’s apostrophe to the “men and Christians” in the final stanza could alternatively be read as questioning the potency of both their morals and their manhood vis-à-vis the horror of slavery and the “deed of fearful daring” of the primal mother erupting in the cornered enslaved woman (p. 86). In fact, the poem’s finishing barrage of questions, by linking the “thrill” and “chill” of the act to its call for abolitionist action, firmly places the horror of that power at the foundation of social morality, as the Kristevan abject is supposed to do, yet urging not to abject that mother, but to rejoin her “on the side of freedom” (p. 86).

The above permutations of the slave-mother-murderess archetype find their most complex treatment yet in the hands of African American novelist, critic, and 1993 Nobel laureate, Toni Morrison. Leon Bynum shows how Ohio-born Morrison read a small newspaper article on Margaret Garner’s story, “‘A Visit to a Slave Mother Who Killed Her Child’, written by a minister, P. S. Bassett, and published on February 12, 1856 in *American Baptist*,” and her imagination became “captured” by the powerful emotional and moral dilemmas in it (4). The fruit of this encounter was a 1987 novel that a committee of 125 American literature experts in the 2006 *Times Literary Supplement* declared to be “the best American novel of the last 25 years”: *Beloved* (Ash 2006).

The novel, which became a successful film starring Oprah Winfrey in 2003, and a 2005 opera titled *Margaret Garner* by Richard Danielpour, with a libretto by Morrison, focuses on Sethe, an escaped slave who, when faced with the prospect of recapture and return to the hellish plantation, ironically named “Sweet Home,” kills her two-year-old daughter and buries her in a grave designated for lack of money by only one word: “Beloved.” Years later, Sethe’s house is haunted by, first, the irate spirit of the murdered baby and second, by an unknown young woman with babyish attitudes and a strange scar on her neck. She claims the name Beloved as well as Sethe’s unconditional, exclusive love and exhausting care, little by little sucking the life out of her until Beloved looks pregnant with the fat of fulfillment, while Sethe shrivels down to a moribund infant. Recognizing the threat, the neighborhood black women, led by Denver, Sethe’s youngest and free-born daughter, organize a makeshift exorcism, but Sethe reacts with violent madness at the prospect of a second

separation. Thus, even though the ghost is ousted, so is Sethe's will to live and fight, despite the loving support she gets from Denver and another former slave from Sweet Home, Paul D. Morrison purposefully leaves the story open-ended and, instead, ends with the word "Beloved," an isolated paragraph of its own, underlining via this ghostly echo that such an act of utter horror and devotion can never be overcome (Morrison 1991, p. 338).

Morrison's plot and symbols deftly blend the two horrors, Kristevan abjection stemming from the primal mother and the social neurosis of slavery: "Nurture-related images are persistently commingled with violence, rape, betrayal, loss of kinship, blood, and ultimately death" (Hichri 2013, p. 204). Sethe's name recalls Seth, the horrific ancient Egyptian god of violence and the desert, but also Seth, the third son of Adam and Eve and the progenitor of all humankind (since he was forefather to Noah). For Sethe, the worst part of her rape at Sweet Home consists of the two nephews of the owner, "the schoolteacher," sucking with their polluting "mossy teeth" her breasts dry of the milk on which she fed her beloved baby, making an abjection out of mothering (Morrison 1991, p. 20). Denver's birth occurs almost under the waters of the liminal Ohio river and at the confused and threatening boundaries of life and death, while Sethe is almost dead from whipping and the toils of running away. Later, Beloved conjures herself as rising like a sprite from the murky abjection of some womb-like watery underworld, and, at her first sight, Sethe is seized with an uncontrollable urge to pee, mixing, by her own account, the abject fluids of micturition and parturition (pp. 62–63). When Sethe is flogged by the schoolteacher, the infected markings on her back form a blooming chokecherry tree, a symbol of spring nature and cultural violation, and, thus, twice abject. The same mixing of fluids occurs when a dazed Sethe, having just killed her youngest, is told to nurse baby Denver but doesn't wash first, "So Denver took her mother's milk right along with the blood of her sister" (p. 187). Most characteristic, however, of the abject womb-tomb motif is the scene where Sethe, because she can't afford to pay for Beloved's grave marker, is forced to sell her body to the engraver, "her knees wide open as any grave" right on top her baby's tombstone, and while the engraver's young son looks on in Oedipal anger and lust (p. 5).

Characteristic of the abject feminine's capacity for blending regulated and separate categories is, first, the total, practically erotic identification of Sethe and Beloved, their "too thick" love, and, second, the confusion of ages occurring among the women of the novel, symbolized by the ghost of "two tiny hand prints" appearing on a birthday cake, as if disrupting the normal growth of human subjects toward individuation (pp. 202, 3). It is the same abject effect as slavery, which, for Paul D, "broke into children what Garner had raised into men" (p. 271). The ancient matriarch, Sethe's grandmother, is named Baby Shuggs; Beloved is both baby, sexually mature young woman and death crone, fulfilling in her eerie baffling of categories the archetype of the Triple Goddess; and while she fattens to a parody of pregnancy, the iron-willed Sethe dwindles to an embryo from hunger and distress. Finally, the lines

between the living and the dead blend, even in a kind of linguistic abjection, through the three consecutive chapters Morrison arranges toward the end of the novel. First Sethe gives her own version of the story, then Beloved hers—in a first-ever revelation of the perspective of the murdered infant representing the “sixty million” dead Africans of the Middle Passage—and then their voices unite and mingle in representation of the ego-annihilating love-hate relationship of pre-Oedipal mother and Semiotic-bound child, culminating in their mutual refrain: “You are mine” (pp. 266–67).

However, this ever-present sense of abjection has been steadily attributed by the many critics who have noted it exclusively to, and as stemming from, Sethe as a metonymy for the horrors of slavery (Otten 1993; Marks 2002; Hichri 2013; Putnam 2011; Moglen 1993). Trudier Harris comments on the abnormality of mother-child relations in Morrison’s text, noting that the idealization of black females as “towers of strength against the degradation of slavery” breeds disease: “there is an implied ideology of domination—emotional domination, though sometimes physical as well—in most of their interactions with their offspring ... representations of tyranny between mother and child, pictured as almost biologically determined”, while Keith Mitchell attributes monstrous non-normativity to Beloved, but insofar as she is paradigmatic of all female bodies in the text (Harris 1995, pp. 110, 111; Mitchell 2006).

Yet, a more careful reading of both the text and its critics would reveal that the nexus of abjection is not Sethe, but rather Beloved, as both the embodiment of the “hauntology” of slavery and the horror of the abjected pre-Oedipal. It is from her that Sethe’s two boys run in terror and she who drives Baby Shuggs to despair and death (Morrison 1991, pp. 3–4). For Lois Lyles, Beloved’s false-pregnancy swelling is tantamount to the Kristevan abject: “Since the societal upheaval associated ... with the oppressiveness of slavery, inverts the normative conditions of life, fatness in the time of catastrophic social change is equivalent to the bloating of the long-decaying corpse; to the swelling of the pus-laden wound” (1999, p. 105). Claudine Raynaud’s exemplary Kristevan reading of the “Beloved” monologue, even though she still claims it concerns “yet another version of the struggle of the daughter to free herself from the murderous mother,” reconstructs the ghost’s origin from her perspective, as if the Middle Passage experience were the *chora* (an unthinkable fusion, indeed, yet historically true, for it “birthed” the enslaved subject!) (1999, p. 71). She notes how the ghost is cathected in the Semiotic—evident in the language of her monologue, “a strangely circular text composed of fragments of ‘images’ that hardly add up to a narrative”—because of the trauma of being “abandoned” by her mother (who is thrown overboard the slaver ship for resisting rape), with whom she existed in her mind in a “total fusion with and possession of the mother ... a return to abjection” (Raynaud 1999, pp. 70, 83). The monologue also reveals Beloved’s single purpose for existing: to rejoin her lost mother at all costs, even by “possessing” her in the form of a haunting, and, thus, to re-enter the Semiotic, “a hot thing,” as she says, in which her infantile emotions of extreme rage at abandonment and all-consuming desire for her

nurturer will be accommodated (Morrison 1991, p. 266). In light of the above, it is very hard not to see *Beloved*, instead, as the one “thrown beside her self, ab-jected, cast off” by her mother, who withholds her smile, that is, her love, from a daughter whose future is already tainted by horror, precisely as if she were disabled by slavery (Raynaud 1999, p. 71; Morrison 1991, pp. 264–65). And, if *Beloved* appears as paradigmatic of the “sixty million/and more,” she is also, for Kristin Boudreau, a stand-in for the precariousness of the pre-Oedipal child, susceptible to abjection: “she only literalizes what occurs to all other characters in Morrison’s novel. They, like *Beloved*, exist at the pleasure of other selves” (Boudreau 1995, pp. 463–64). If they are abject(ed), she is twice so as “a split-off fragment of themselves” (Moglen 1993, p. 30).

The abjecting motion of the mother is, most of all, evident in the murder scene, where the slaying of her baby is equated with Sethe’s abjection of the schoolteacher: “she had something in her arms that stopped him in his tracks. He took a backward step with each jump of the baby heart until finally there were none” (Morrison 1991, p. 201). There is a strange symmetry in that scene, with the schoolteacher and the mother both attempting to claim “their” property and ending in tragedy, that prompts Christopher Peterson to ask, “What does it mean to claim one’s children as property? When Sethe declares in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, ‘she my daughter. She mine,’ what is the difference between *her* claim and the slave master’s (200)?” (2006, p. 548). The critic concludes that “[k]inship becomes the foil to the violent negativity of the master/slave dialectic, notwithstanding the possibility that kinship, both paternal *and* maternal, might be implicated in that very negativity” (Peterson 2006, p. 549).

Sethe is also not the only “abandoning mother” in the novel: she herself complains that her mother’s backbreaking duties didn’t allow her to show any affection for, care for, or even nurse her daughter (Moglen 1993, p. 30). Interestingly, the effect of slavery is to turn the mother from a semiotic into a symbolic thing, for she teaches Sethe to recognize her by the slave brand under her breast—locus of nurturing marred by slavery—and, when the girl begs that she be branded too, to be close to her mother, Sethe’s mother slaps her angrily (Morrison 1991, pp. 75–76). Sethe also learns that her mother had murdered all of her other babies who were the products of white slaver rape, in a clear gesture of motherly abjection: “Without names, she threw them” (pp. 77–78). Finally, readers learn that Ella, the neighbor woman who initiates *Beloved*’s exorcism ritual—we could call her the Leader of the Chorus in classical tragedy terms—has also abjected the product of a white slaver rape: “a hairy white thing, fathered by ‘the lowest yet’,” by starving it to death (p. 318). It is the double denial of that baby, as flesh and as memory, that sets the exorcism going: “The idea of that pup coming back to whip her too set her jaw working, and then Ella hollered. Instantly, the kneelers and the standers joined her” (p. 318). Considering that women’s “sound in *Beloved*, embodied as cries and utterances, has significance that in many ways surpasses that of identifiable musical sound,” we can see that moment of motherly abjection as the soundtrack of the Semiotic, befitting a primal mother (Reed 2007, p. 57).

Ella's gesture becoming communal establishes its apotropaic nature in the function of the abject within society: "a ritualistic sacrifice of Beloved, a ceremony that frees the community from this pervasive haunting," since "[t]he supernatural existence of Beloved, who acts as a scapegoat for the evils of the past, threatens the naturalized set of inherited codes by which the community defines itself" (Lawrence 1991, p. 189). Like a coda, the last chapter emphasizes that the community actively "disremembered" Beloved, abjecting her from all the "dearly beloved" we are supposed to remember, since, "as Morrison's text is well aware, 'beloved' by itself, is nothing" (Morrison 1991, p. 336; Weinstock 2005, p. 133). "This is not a story to pass on," the chapter's refrain repeats variably three times, like the "amen" concluding a precarious ritual (Morrison 1991, p. 337). Morrison's text, though an attempt at "rememory" of the unspeakable thing, also works as such a periodical exorcism of the abject signified by the ellipsis of the gravestone, borne of the author's self-avowed responsibility of "artistically burying" the unburied (1994, p. 209).

The abjection of Beloved is finally justified by showing what would have happened otherwise. Sethe trades one slavery for another, as "the home becomes like a prison cell for the two disturbed women" devoting "their time and energy to feeding a past that generates nothing of use for the future, just as slaves were forced to invest their human emotions and labor into kinship relations that were formally meaningless, the products of which belonged not to them but to their masters" (House 1990, p. 23; Balon 2015, p. 146). The nightmarish scenario of a ravenous baby growing to adult-sized needs (and beyond), yet not leaving home to provide for itself, is realized when Beloved literally proceeds to eat her nurturer out of house and home—and self: "She took the best of everything—first," while manipulating Sethe's guilt to torment her emotionally and physically (Morrison 1991, p. 296). In the end, it all boils down to a "mother versus child" life-or-death dilemma, as voiced by the neighbors: "'You can't just up and kill your children.' 'No, and the children can't just up and kill the mama'" (p. 314).

In that sense, Sethe's story works like a flipside Oedipus, as an apotropaic example of consummate horror to be ever avoided: if a child reentering the forbidden womb is one horror culture cannot abide, it is an equal horror for the mother to suffer a child that won't leave the Semiotic. Lawrence underlines this Oedipal element: "[Beloved's] unadulterated narcissism permits her to 'seduce' her mother in the Clearing, an impulsive sensuality that probably derives from her memory of breastfeeding," and whose "tender kisses entrance Sethe until she finds herself forced against the wall of the incest taboo: 'You too old for that' (pp. 97–98)" (1991, p. 196). Hence, the ramifications of Morrison's dictum, "To go back to the original hunger was impossible" (1991, p. 145).

In conclusion, these infanticidal gestures—and many more similar ones recorded both in history and in literature inspired from it—affirm not only the abject threat of the primal mother according to the Kristevan model but the further horror of what happens if her claims of natural, Semiotic-defined bond with the child are disturbed within a socially neurotic context. Motherly abjection is

posited not (or not only) as the threat one must run away from to achieve socialization, but rather as the co-responding force to a condition that is *both* abject *and* socialized. Thus the threat of motherly abjection reinforces the sense of vigilance the rest of the society needs to show regarding matters of social consciousness and past wrongs, especially the kind of wrongs, like slavery, too horrible to “memory” yet too important to suppress: a memory itself abject (Hill 1981, p. 61).

Does that mean perhaps that the archetypal pattern of abjection is far more flexible—ergo political and responsive to the Symbolic order—than its initial Semiotic ascription might let on? That, when society itself is abject and leads to a de-subjectifying entry of the human being in it, primal abjection becomes, in turn, desirable? The story of Beloved emerges from “unspeakable thoughts, unspoken”, yet, ironically, this unspeakability, which is the opposite of silence, is meant to resist cultural “amnesia” (Morrison 1991, p. 245; Marks 2002, p. 15). While the true past, like a mother, abjects us—the present-day scholars or artists, apologists for the human condition—we, like needy babies, still cling to it for meaning or atonement; for making, in Kristeva’s words, some culture out of horror.

NOTES

1. On the Triple Goddess, see Robert Graves, *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth*, FSG Classics series (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013); also, Carl Gustav Jung, “A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity,” in vol. 11 of *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung—Psychology and Religion: West and East*, translated by R.F.C. Hull, Bollingen Series 20 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958, pp. 107–200).
2. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud observes his toddler grandson Ernst hiding and retrieving a spool on a string while ritualistically repeating the words “fort” (“gone”) and “da” (there) and theorizes (originally in a 1920 essay) that the hidden-retrieved object stands for the mother, whose absence, even momentary, generates in the child an unbearable anxiety on the horrific prospect that she may never return, and, hence, his only source of nurturing, love, and life support will be gone.
3. On Euripides’s infanticidal innovation, see Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, 4.56; also, Emily McDermott, *Euripides’ Medea: The Incarnation of Disorder* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1985).
4. Jean Anouilh, *Médée* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1946); Cherríe Moraga, *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea* (New York: West End Press, 2001).
5. According to Creophylus’s scholium in *Medea* (p. 264).
6. Although I have consulted Kovacs’s text for the original Greek, the translation of the verses is mine.
7. As per Southern painter Thomas Satterwhite Noble’s famous 1867 painting of Garner’s deed under that title; see also Steven Weisenburger’s *Modern Medea: A Family Story of Slavery and Child-Murder in the Old South* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999).
8. This poem is not to be confused with a poem written at roughly the same time and titled simply “The Slave Mother,” in which Harper portrays a mother whose

child is separated and sold away from her at a slave auction. It was first published in Harper's best-known collection, *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects* (Boston: J.B. Yerrington and Son, 1854).

9. For a detailed and insightful literary analysis of Harper's poem in comparison with Morrison's *Beloved*, see the relevant chapter in Wendy Dasler Johnson's *Antebellum American Women's Poetry: A Rhetoric of Sentiment* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2016).
10. Regarding Cullen's play, which falls under a different genre than the two works examined here, Lillian Corti notes, "the works of Brent, Stowe, Chopin, and Cullen himself suggest that the relationship between racism and child murder was well known to various writers well before the dissemination of militant ideology in the second half of this century" (1998, p. 625).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ash, Adam. 2006. Bookplanet: Our Best Writers Say the Best American Novel of the Last 25 Years is Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. *Adam Ash Blog*, May 12. <http://adamash.blogspot.gr/2006/05/bookplanet-our-best-writers-say-best.html>. Accessed on July 12, 2017.
- Badcock, Hendley. 2016. Commentary on 'The Slave Mother: A Tale of Ohio.' *Shenandoahliterary.org*. <http://shenandoahliterary.org/blog/2016/02/the-slave-mother-a-tale-of-ohio-by-frances-ellen-watkins-harper>. Accessed on June 20, 2017.
- Balon, Rebecca. 2015. Kinless or Queer: The Unthinkable Queer Slave in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Robert O'Hara's *Insurrection: Holding History*. *African American Review* 48 (1–2): 141–155.
- Boudreau, Kristin. 1995. Pain and the Unmaking of Self in Toni Morrison's 'Beloved'. *Contemporary Literature* 36 (3): 447–465.
- Bynum, Leon James. 2011. Toni Morrison and the Translation of History in *Margaret Garner*. *Doletiana: Special Issue on Opera and Translation* 3: 1–14.
- Corti, Lillian. 1998. Countée Cullen's *Medea*. *African American Review* 32 (4): 621–634.
- Dawkins, Laura. 2009. 'A Seeping Invisibility': Maternal Dispossession and Resistance in Barbara Chase-Riboud's *Sally Hemins* and *The President's Daughter*. *Callaloo* 32 (3): 792–808.
- Euripides. 1994. *Cyclops. Alcestris. Medea*. Ed. and trans. David Kovacs. Loeb Classical Library 12. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0114>. Accessed on June 15, 2017.
- Farrar, Stephanie. 2015. Maternity and Black Women's Citizenship in Frances Watkins Harper's Early Poetry and Late Prose. *Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S.* 40 (1): 52–75.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1961a. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Trans. and ed. James Strachey. With an Introduction and Notes by Gregory Zilboorg. London: Norton.
- . 1961b. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Trans. and ed. James Strachey. London: Norton.
- Harper, Frances E. 1990. The Slave Mother: A Tale of the Ohio. In *A Brighter Coming Day: A Frances Ellen Watkins Harper Reader*, ed. Frances Smith Foster, 84–86. New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York.

- Harris, Trudier. 1995. This Disease Called Strength: Some Observations on the Compensating Construction of Black Female Character. *Literature and Medicine* 14 (1): 109–126.
- Hendler, Glenn. 1999. The Structure of Sentimental Experience. *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 12 (1): 146–152.
- Hichri, Asma. 2013. Hunger ‘Beyond Appetite’: Nurture Dialectics in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*. *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 44 (2–3): 195–220.
- Hill, Patricia Liggins. 1981. ‘Let Me Make the Songs for the People’: A Study of Frances Watkins Harper’s Poetry. *Black American Literature Forum* 15 (2): 60–65.
- House, Elizabeth B. 1990. Toni Morrison’s Ghost: The Beloved Is Not Beloved. *Studies in American Fiction* 18 (1): 17–26.
- Jones, Jacqueline. 1982. ‘My Mother Was Much of a Woman’: Black Women, Work, and the Family under Slavery. *Feminist Studies* 8 (2): 235–269.
- Kristeva, Julia. 1982. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press.
- . 1984. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Trans. Margaret Waller. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lawrence, David. 1991. Fleshly Ghost and Ghostly Flesh: The Word and the Body in *Beloved*. *Studies in American Fiction* 19 (2): 189–201.
- Lyles, Lois. 1999. Let My Daughter Go: The Jewish Mother and the Black Mother in Novels about Catastrophe and Bondage. *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 17 (2): 102–109.
- Marks, Kathleen. 2002. *Toni Morrison’s Beloved and the Apotropaic Imagination*. Columbia, MO: The University of Missouri Press.
- McCabe, Janet L., and Dave Holmes. 2011. Reversing Kristeva’s First Instance of Abjection: The Formation of Self Reconsidered. *Nursing Inquiry* 18 (1): 77–83.
- Mitchell, Keith. 2006. Femininity, Abjection and (Black) Masculinity in James Baldwin’s *Giovanni’s Room* and Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*. In *James Baldwin and Toni Morrison: Comparative, Critical and Theoretical Essays*, ed. Lvalerie King and Lynn Orilla Scott, 261–286. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Moglen, Helene. 1993. Redeeming History: Toni Morrison’s ‘Beloved’. *Cultural Critique* 24: 17–40.
- Morrison, Toni. 1991. *Beloved*. New York: Signet.
- . 1994. A Conversation: Gloria Naylor and Toni Morrison, 1985. In *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, ed. Danille Taylor-Guthrie, 188–217. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press.
- O’Brien, C.C. 2009. ‘The White Women All Go for Sex’: Frances Harper on Suffrage, Citizenship, and the Reconstruction South. *African American Review* 43 (4): 605–620.
- Otten, Terry. 1993. Horrific Love in Toni Morrison’s Fiction. *Modern Fiction Studies* 39 (3–4): 651–667.
- Person, Leland S. 2001. The Dark Labyrinth of Mind: Hawthorne, Hester, and the Ironies of Racial Mothering. *Studies in American Fiction* 29 (1): 33–48.
- Peterson, Christopher. 2006. Beloved’s Claim. *Modern Fiction Studies* 52 (3): 548–569.
- Putnam, Amanda. 2011. Mothering Violence: Ferocious Female Resistance in Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Beloved*, and *A Mercy*. *Black Women, Gender & Families* 5 (2): 25–43.

- Raynaud, Claudine. 1999. The Poetics of Abjection in *Beloved*. In *Black Imagination and the Middle Passage*, ed. Maria Diedrich, Henry Louis Gates Jr., and Carl Pedersen, 70–85. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Reed, Roxanne R. 2007. The Restorative Power of Sound: A Case for Communal Catharsis in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 23 (1): 55–71.
- Sanborn, Geoffrey. 2005. Mother's Milk: Frances Harper and the Circulation of Blood. *ELH* 72 (3): 691–715.
- Spillers, Hortense J. 1987. Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book. *Diacritics* 17 (2): 64–81.
- Van Den Berg, Jacinta. 2007. 'Are You Weaker than a Woman, Weaker than Even a Mother?' Abjection and Infanticide in *Dead Europe* and *Drift*. *Australian Literary Studies* 23: 230–244.
- Walker, Alice. 1994. In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens. In *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from the Harlem Renaissance to the Present*, ed. Angelyn Mitchell, 401–409. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Weinstock, Jeffrey Andrew. 2005. Ten Minutes for Seven Letters: Reading *Beloved's* Epitaph. *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory* 61 (3): 129–152.



Horror, Race, and Reality

Ordner W. Taylor III

Often, horror is associated with British Gothic selections, such as *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” (1789), or *Frankenstein* (1818) that explore the dark and mysterious, or it is connected with American works such as “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (1820), “The Tell-Tale Heart” (1843), and *The Turn of the Screw* (1878) that traverse the macabre and the demented. British Gothic selections traditionally focused on the fictional haunting of the past, and American selections perseverated distrustfully on its present and future New World anxieties of dangers and violence connected with the frontier, threats to Democracy, and issues of race (Lloyd-Smith 2004, p. 4). These characteristics were the nascent markers of the horror tradition, but contemporary horror authors, such as Stephen King, create selections like *It* (1987) that explore the dark recesses of the human psyche, with a clown who functions as the anthropomorphic manifestation of fears, and Jeanne Kalogridis’s historical fiction, *The Inquisitor’s Wife* (2013), which explores man’s inhumanity to man in the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition.

Within the African American artistic tradition, horror manifests itself in a multitude of ways that include novels, like Tananarive Due’s *My Soul to Keep* (1997), Octavia Butler’s *Fledgling* (2005), and L.A. Bank’s *Bad Blood* (2008), that take the classical themes of werewolves, vampires, and immortals and incorporate people of color into the selections. These works move classical horror images to a more diversified authoring and readership of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. James Weldon Johnson’s *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912), Nella Larsen’s *Passing* (1929), Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (1952), and Chesya Burke’s *Let’s Play White* (2011) treat America’s fears of miscegenation and misunderstood racial identity. Jordan

O. W. Taylor III (✉)
Delaware State University, Dover, DE, USA

Peele's cinematic selection, *Get Out* (2017), tackles the ever-evolving yet still-complicated realities of race and identity that African Americans navigate through the present day, especially when they involve interracial romances.

However, the greatest contribution to the African American horror tradition comes directly from the history and experiences of slavery. The early selections, the autobiographical works of slaves known as slave narratives, were often produced with the expressed purpose of exposing white audiences to the innumerable and horrific circumstances that comprised slavery. At the same time, these slave narratives are also works of great literary quality. Beyond slavery, racism and the sometimes-daily obstacles associated with race became recurring themes within the earliest and most recent selections of African American literary works. Through an examination of the literary canon and cinematic history, observers can clearly see how race has contributed to and has been a reflection of the horror in the African American experience expressed in African American letters.

Slavery in the United States lasted for almost 250 years, from 1619 with the arrival of the first African slaves in Jamestown until the end of the Civil War in 1865. The New World slave experience was unique to human history because the American enslavement of Africans relegated slaves to a subhuman caste of chattel that endured for centuries. This continuous generational condition led the freeborn, African American abolitionist and philosopher David Walker to write in his 1829 selection, *David Walker's Appeal* that "we (coloured people of these United States), are the most degraded, wretched, and abject set of beings that ever lived since the world began" (Walker 2000, p. 3). Because slaves in America had no chance for upward social or economic mobility, Walker concluded that the sufferings of antiquity's slaves of Greece, Rome, and Egypt were not comparable to the generational confinement of American slaves (p. 3).

Walker's work significantly contributed to American letters because his selection mimicked the United States Constitution with its Age of Enlightenment reasoning and Neoclassic styling, while simultaneously offering literary parallelism with other American patriots. Walker's call for freedom, in style and substance, stands shoulder to shoulder with voices like Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* (1776), Patrick Henry's "liberty or death,"¹ and Thomas Jefferson's self-evident truths of universal equality. Where the founding fathers spoke against metaphoric and philosophical oppression, Walker spoke of a literal and physical slavery that was unavoidable for many. Walker's text offered a macrocosmic view of the horror and injustice of slavery, but other African American writers addressed the direct, quotidian, and lifelong horrors of American slavery.

Tim Hashaw in "The First Black Americans" records that the first thirty-two African slaves were sold in Jamestown in August 1619 and were quickly put to work as field laborers working along the James River (Hashaw 2007, p. 63). During the next two decades, Africans were permitted to marry each other and European settlers. These same Africans continued to farm with the intention of purchasing their freedom. Within twenty years, some Africans were successful enough to employ white servants to work their farms, while other Africans obtained positions in the local government or in the militia. By 1691, Virginia

changed, and Jamestown outlawed the freeing of slaves within the colony, forbade slaves from purchasing their own freedom, and stripped previously obtained liberties, rights, and privileges from Africans. In 1705, Virginia officially institutionalized slavery, and the growing number of profitable slave-owning plantations wanted more slavery in Virginia. The economic boom, propelled by chattel slavery, created a new situation in which British farmers of tobacco, cotton, and rice established a political and economic primacy over the Southern United States (Andrews 1996, p. 131). The new economic and political status of these British immigrant farmers ostensibly began much of the horror that Africans and their descendants experienced for the next 200 years.

Eighteenth-century enslaved Africans saw a very different New World, one that saw them differently; Africans were suddenly a subhuman group, with no perceived intellect or right to human dignity. Scholar Orlando Patterson describes the African slave as a “social nonperson,” who experienced a “social death” because the slave’s existence was solely defined by and in relationship to his/her master’s identity (1982, pp. 5, 8). Slaves literally lived and died at the whim of masters, and many facets of their lives from birth until death were ruled by someone else. The slightest perceived infraction could result in psychological, emotional, or physical harm. Many slaves lived in constant terror because the slave experience did not offer security or stability, but rather a reality of constant change, isolation, violence, and unexpected danger.

This formula of unexpected danger, isolation, and violence includes many of the conventions that one expects from a British Gothic novel. The fears concerning independence and democracy in the political state, alongside of dangers of a corrupt and/or abusive religious state, are typical conventions of American Gothic selections. The British novels *The Old English Baron* (1777) and *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) treat the terror of victimization associated with obscured inner spaces of haunted mansions, secret rooms, and treacherous caves that their fictional characters experience (Wolff 1979, pp. 99–100). The American novels *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and *The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative of 1757* (1826) explore abuses of the church and the violence of the New World. Many of these themes are incorporated in enslaved African experiences of horror and victimization in the inner and outer spaces in the New World; these slave realities can easily be seen in the autobiographical work of slave narratives.

One of the earliest slave narratives, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself* (1789), detailed the horror of Africans first being enslaved by Europeans through his recounting of his life from childhood through the Middle Passage until he buys his freedom at age twenty-one. Here, readers see the true horrors of African enslavement through the departure from Africa and the unimaginable voyage of the Middle Passage. Chapter One discusses Equiano’s early life and the richness of Igbo culture in modern-day Nigeria, the bravery of his royal family, and the nuances of tribal war customs. Chapter Two reveals the existence of slavery in Africa, but Equiano notes that African slavery unequivocally differed from

American slavery because slaves in the African tradition retained their human status and their chance for upward mobility. To illustrate this point, Equiano narrates a time in his life when, after he was purchased as a slave in Africa, he was pleasantly surprised to find himself treated as a member of the family to which he was enslaved (1987, p. 30).

Equiano's first experience with American slavery was initial astonishment "converted into terror" because he thought the white crew would kill him immediately (1987, pp. 32–33). On the deck of the slave ship, Equiano saw dejection and sorrow from fellow Africans, and he found himself overpowered with "horror and anguish" (p. 33). This experience did not compare to the ship's overcrowded hold, where darkness and unbreathable air in a "loathsomeness of stench and crying together"—produced by bodily fluids and excrement, alongside dead and dying human bodies—ultimately created a ubiquitous misery (p. 33). After having been on the ship and having experienced unspeakable horrors, he finally wrote, "I now wished for the last friend, death, to relieve me" (p. 33). While it is unlikely that Equiano intended to create a Gothic scene, his narrative does, and Equiano's autobiography is not the only selection to do this.

The *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845) presents episodes with the elements of classic Gothic literature that reflect the true horror of the American slave, also. In Chapter One, Douglass recounts an incident of his youth in which his Aunt Hester—who was very beautiful—was brutally whipped because the overseer called for her, and she was with another slave from a neighboring farm. He was furious and ordered her into the kitchen, stripped to her waste, hoisted by her hands to an overhead hook, and whipped mercilessly until "red blood ... came dripping to the floor" (1987, p. 259). Douglass says that, "I was so terrified and horror-stricken at the sight, that I hid myself in a closet ... till long after the bloody transaction was over. I expected to be next" (p. 259). Until witnessing that event, Douglass had been shielded from the horrors of slavery, but he notes that the event left an indelible imprint in his memory (p. 258). Later in his life, Douglass encountered violence when he got into a fight with an unjust slave breaker who had abused him. In Chapter Ten, he described the event in great detail, and it concluded with a fight that lasted two hours and a defeated slave breaker who found himself broken both physically and psychologically.

These episodes are important because they reflect multiple aspects of vulnerability within the slave experiences. Aunt Hester's situation recreates the Gothic scene in which a heroine, engaged in a virtuous courtship, is pursued and overtaken by a villainous rival (Wolff 1979, p. 103). Douglass intimates that the overseer was not concerned with protecting his aunt's innocence; nobody "will suspect him of any such virtue" (Wolff 1979, p. 259). His aunt was beaten because her love interest posed a threat to the overseer's desire for sexual conquest. Hester was ostensibly punished for posturing as a human by trying to experience companionship. This example reflects a true horror that slaves faced—even the slightest demonstration of humanity could result in violence or death. While Hester was vulnerable and victimized, young Douglass was also emotionally and psychologically traumatized by the events.

First, he saw his aunt stripped—which he likely recognized as problematic—then he witnessed a brutal whipping of a close female family member whom he likely felt some kind of internal motivation to protect, but that feeling conflicted with a need to protect himself. The inability to protect his aunt can be seen as an inciting incident of emasculation and psychological conditioning that took place with young male slaves. These young men learned very early on—just as Douglass did from Hester’s experience—that the slightest demonstration of humanity could result in violence or death. Douglass’s fight with the slave breaker, on the other hand, reflects a different type of vulnerability. Douglass, after being assaulted several times without justification, decided to fight back; even though he knew that his choice could cost him his life. One point that is notable about this situation is that he was abused by his master’s employee, and all slaves lived with the knowledge that any white man could end their lives for any reason without much fear of punishment.

Where Douglass learned of slavery’s violent horrors at a young age, Harriet Jacobs learned of the added perils of being a female slave as a teenager, and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) discusses the vulnerability of female slaves with unambiguous clarity. Spending her life—from pubescence to adulthood—evading her lecherous master’s advances, Jacobs discussed how her master began to corrupt her mind with sexual advances at age fifteen. She continued to say that she saw a man forty years her senior violate the laws of nature and common decency (Jacobs 1987, p. 361). She furthers the point by saying that no female slave was safe from the sexual tentacle of slave masters anywhere; the female slave was a prisoner in the house and victim of the house’s tyrant. Readers ultimately discover how Jacobs hid from her master in her grandmother’s very small attic for seven years until she could finally escape to the North.

While Jacobs and Douglass intended to create political, abolitionist works—Jacobs saying, “I have not exaggerated the wrongs inflicted by Slavery; on the contrary, my descriptions fall far short of the facts” and continuing, “But I do earnestly desire to arouse the women of the North to a realizing sense of the condition of two millions of women at the South, still in bondage, suffering what I suffered, and most of them far worse”—they unintentionally created literary works that reveal classic Gothic motifs of tyrannical males and the houses of horrors where vulnerable heroines are abused at will (Jacobs 1987, p. 335). Instead of late nights and dark castles or secret passageways, the slave narratives deal with hushed slave masters entering slave quarters during quiet, unobserved nights. Where Gothic selections recognized the importance of preserving the heroine’s innocence, slave narratives quietly exposed the shame that accompanied slave women’s stolen virtue. Different from the characters Ambrosio and Antonia in Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796), the heroine cannot attempt to flee her attacker, and the slave woman’s rapist would not pay for his crime with an agonizing and slow death as Ambrosio does. The slave woman was prohibited from revealing her rapist, even if he impregnated her. By ethos and/or law, slave paternity could not be discussed. If it were, the

slave, not the rapist, was punished, as is the case in Chapter Two of *Incidents* (Jacobs 1987, pp. 348–349). Jacobs’s experience with sexual abuse was a metonym for many slave women’s experiences, and her horrors and experiences were those of millions of slave women at different points in history.

In exceptional cases, female slaves fought back with success. On June 23, 1855, in Missouri, a slave named Celia did just that when she murdered her master, who had been raping her since age fourteen. Celia, nineteen at the time and a mother of two, feeling that she could no longer endure the abuse, killed her master after he entered her cabin late in the night to rape her. After clubbing him to death, she burned his body in her cabin’s fireplace and spread his ashes about the property the next morning. Her master’s disappearance was discovered, and Celia eventually revealed the details of his death. She explained that the rapes were constant, and they even continued through her pregnancies. Celia said that she appealed to his family and even to him, but neither proved to be successful. Ultimately, Celia was able to escape her house of horrors by directly exacting revenge on her perpetrator. Her decision to be human ended in a court trial that received national attention for a few weeks, a death sentence, and a book—*Celia, a Slave* (1991)—that memorialized her tragedy. The cost of Celia’s humanity was two lives, hers and her rapist’s. This was not always the case, however. In some instances, female slaves suffered in silence while others found alternative ways to effect change.

In January 1856 in Ohio, Margaret Garner, a twenty-one-year-old mother of four, decided to indirectly exact revenge against her abusive slave master by killing one of her children. After escaping with her family from the slave-state Kentucky to the free-state Ohio, Garner quickly found the house where she was staying surrounded by marshals. Rather than return to slavery with her family, she nearly decapitated her oldest daughter, she smashed the head of her younger daughter with a heavy shovel (from which she probably died later in March), and she tried to kill her two sons (Weisenburger 2003, pp. 134; Weisenburger 1999, pp. 74–75). She said that she did this in part to liberate her children from the horrors of bondage. Garner went to stand trial, but she was not executed because, ironically, neither she nor her daughter was considered people but rather chattel. After the court proceedings, the Garner family was eventually sold to a Mississippi plantation, where she eventually died of typhoid fever during the summer of 1858 (Weisenburger 2003, p. 135).

However, Margaret Garner’s story did not end in 1858; in 1987, the future Nobel laureate Toni Morrison authored a neo-slave narrative, *Beloved*, based on Garner’s life events. *Beloved*’s Gothic elements include haunted houses, rape, insanity, isolation, and violence. The novel deals with the secondary tragedies of male characters, Paul D and Stamp Paid, and the primary tragedy of Sethe Suggs. Paul D experiences the loss of life in the death of his friends, the loss of freedom when he is imprisoned, and the loss of manhood when he is raped in prison. Stamp Paid deals with a psychological trauma when he is compelled to surrender his wife to their master’s son for semi-consensual sex that his wife barter for her husband’s life. The main character, Sethe Suggs, (loosely

based on Margaret Garner) sees her mother burned to death, believes that her husband has abandoned her, participates in sexual experiments unwillingly, nearly decapitates her daughter purposefully, and deals with a ghost that haunts her home and her past. Among the many themes in *Beloved*, destruction in its various forms is central. Another notable theme is righteousness and specifically Sethe's choice to kill her child to keep her from slavery's horror.

In the novel, Sethe becomes a pariah in her community. Her mother-in-law endures a self-imposed silencing, and Sethe's immediate family is forced to cohabitate with a ghost. When Paul D, her love interest, learns of Sethe's choice, he quasi-reprimands Sethe, telling her that her love was "too thick," and he says, "You got two feet, Sethe, not four" (Morrison 1987, pp. 164, 165). When Morrison was asked about Sethe's choice in August of 1987, she offered an almost paradoxical response saying, "It was absolutely the right thing to do, but she [Sethe] had no right to do it." Morrison says that she, too, may have done the same thing in that same situation (Rothstein 1987, p. 17). Where Garner's story speaks to slavery's horror, modern readers sometime question how filicide as salvation is valid. Here is the point where isolation, danger, and violence change from potential to kinetic realities and have concretizing effects. This is where the true horrors of slavery show themselves clearly, and this is what predicated Garner's choice.

When one considers the situations as they occurred, Garner's choice seems less complicated. In Eugenia Collier's short neo-slave narrative, "Breeder" (1994), Aunt Peggy recounts the horrors of her teenage slave life to Caroline, who Peggy says is "still too young" to understand (p. 67). Peggy tells Caroline a particularly painful memory of her first experience with breeding—a form of institutionalized, compulsory interslave rape designed to produce more slaves—with an adult male who recognized her youth and innocence. Peggy tells Caroline that, "There's things that's supposed to happen to a young girl, but not like that, not when she's too young to feel nothing but hurt and shame..." (p. 75). Joy DeGruy's *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* (2005) explores American slavery's impact in the contemporary world, and she postulates how a slave mother would have tried to prepare her prepubescent daughter for the eventuality of rape. DeGruy supposes that a mother would likely tell her daughter about the physical trauma of unwanted sexual contact, the unpredictable frequency of rape, the unpredictable number of participants, and the best strategies for surviving the incidents (pp. 76–78).

The conditions that Olaudah Equiano, Frederick Douglass, Paul D, and Stamp Paid lived under—emasculated from childhood to old age—and the stories of Harriet Jacobs, Aunt Peggy, Sethe Suggs, and Margaret Garner, constantly pursued and assaulted, are the prisms through which the slaves saw their world and the lens through which history must be viewed. A slave father knows his son will see his mother be beaten and knows that his son will not be able to protect her. A husband knows that he will not be able to protect his wife from bartered sex and/or rape. A woman sees her mother killed, is an unwilling participant in sexual experiments, knows her daughter's future will not improve,

and knows that her son is one step from death or sale. These are some of the contributing factors that contemporary readers and observers should consider when judging Margaret Garner's choices. *David Walker's Appeal* not only recognized the abject degradation of slaves, but that reality leads him to say, "I pray God that none like us ever may live again until time shall be no more" (Walker 2000, p. 3).

The horrors of the American slave experience were not limited to historical documents or literary texts; they were explored into the contemporary world through the medium of film, also. *Slaves* (1969), *Mandingo* (1975), *Roots* (1977), *Beloved* (1998), *Sally Hemings* (2000), *12 Years a Slave* (2013), and *Birth of a Nation* (2016) have documented aspects of the slave experience in very different and poignant ways. *Slaves* highlights the sexual and monetary exploitations associated with slavery, and slavery's true horror is well illustrated when Master MacKay refuses to help his dying pregnant slave. When the religious slave, Luke, pleads to MacKay for help, Luke's Christianity is turned on him as a justification for allowing her to die. *Mandingo* deals with sexual angst, interracial affairs, and a no-win situation for a male slave, Mede. After he is forced into sexual intercourse with his white mistress, who bears a biracial child, the visual scene of Mede being forced into the boiling cauldron by the furious cuckold is truly unforgettable.

Alex Haley's *Roots* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved* are film adaptations of their highly praised books that discuss family structures in slave communities. While many viewers remember the brutal whipping that prompts Kunta Kinte to finally call himself by his slave name, Toby, very few can ever forget the image of his foot being severed for trying to escape. The film, *Beloved*, is riddled with dehumanizing images of slavery. While Paul D is punished with the torture device known as the bit in his mouth, Sethe's recall of the lynching of her mother with the metal muzzle in her mother's mouth speaks of a horror that words simply cannot express. *Sally Hemings* documents the complicated story of Thomas Jefferson's affair with his slave, Sally, and the family that results from the affair. Where *Sally Hemings* brings families together, the Oscar-winning film, *12 Years a Slave*, based on Solomon Northup's 1853 slave narrative, reveals how Black families were torn apart. Northup is a free man with a family from New York, who finds himself kidnapped and enslaved in Louisiana's cotton and sugar industries. While his personal tragedy is compelling, nothing compares with the sight of Eliza's agony and mental deterioration at losing her children, the attack on Patsey when she is struck in the head with the glass bottle of alcohol for dancing as instructed, or brutal whipping over soap Patsey receives because she is hated by the wife of the man who repeatedly rapes her.

The 2016 film *Birth of a Nation* appropriates the title of a 1915 film that praises the rise of the Ku Klux Klan to tell the tale of the Nat Turner rebellion of 1831. The horrors in this film are plentiful and representative of many slave experiences. Early in the film, viewers see slaves manipulated by a perverted version of Christianity that reinforces violence. Slaves are reminded to obey their masters as the Bible directs them, and it warns that disobedient slaves are

to be whipped. Midway through the film, a slave refuses to eat, and his slave master knocks his teeth out with a chisel and forces blood-soaked food down his throat. Toward the end, viewers see how slaves use the same perverted Christianity that has bound them to justify a bloody and lethal revolt against slaveowners. The oppressed obtain justice in the only way that they can, and that justice reveals a very painful truth about slavery. The truest horror of slavery is that it destroyed everything that it touched. These cinematic selections function as the visual reminders of that horrific truth about American slavery.

In various ways and in different forms, history recorded the true horrors of the American slave experience. From the Middle Passage to the plantations, the American slave experience was like nothing the world had ever seen. People were transitioned from humans to chattel, and the transformation beset them and their progeny for almost 250 years. What happened there was beyond what history had shown and beyond what the imagination could contrive. Enslaved Africans in America lived realities much harsher than any European fiction. Where Europeans and their American descendants dealt with philosophical bondage and theoretical horror through the Gothic literary tradition, enslaved Africans in America lived a Gothic experience that was so horrifying that words truly could not express or explain its true degradation or depravity; nonetheless, they tried. That exercise of humanity and record for future generations ultimately comprise the constituent parts of the canon of the literary arts of the American slave experience.

NOTE

1. Found in the "Speech to the Second Virginia Convention."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Andrews, William. 1996. The Literature of Slavery and Freedom (1746–1865). In *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay, 127–136. New York: Norton.
- Collier, Eugenia. 1994. *Breeder and Other Stories*. Baltimore: Black Classic Press.
- Douglass, Frederick. 1987. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. In *Classic Slave Narratives*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr., 255–338. New York: Mentor.
- Equiano, Olaudah. 1987. The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African Written by Himself. In *Classic Slave Narratives*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr., 11–182. New York: Mentor.
- Hashaw, Tim. 2007. The First Black Americans. *U.S. News and World Report*, 29 January, p. 63.
- Jacobs, Harriet. 1987. Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. In *Classic Slave Narratives*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr., 334–518. New York: Mentor.
- Lloyd-Smith, Allen. 2004. *American Gothic Fiction: An Introduction*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Morrison, Toni. 1987. *Beloved*. New York: Plume.

- Patterson, Orlando. 1982. *Slavery and Social Death*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Rothstein, Mervyn. 1987. Toni Morrison, in Her New Novel, Defends Women. *New York Times*, 26 August, p. 17.
- Walker, David. 2000. *David Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*. Ed. Peter P. Hinks. University Park: Penn State University Press.
- Weisenburger, Steven. 1999. *Modern Medea*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- . 2003. Margaret Garner. In *The Toni Morrison Encyclopedia*, ed. Elizabeth Ann Beaulieu, 133–135. Westport: Greenwood.
- Wolff, Cynthia Griffin. 1979. The Radcliffean Gothic Model: A Form for Feminine Sexuality. *Modern Language Studies* 9 (3): 98–113.



Postcolonial Horror

Tabish Khair

Ken Gelder correctly notes that the mainstream definition of horror inescapably links it with postcolonial concerns. He states that horror “refused to honor the sanctity of boundaries and borders, whether they were national or bodily” and that it came “to relish the clash between the modern and the traditional, the new and the archaic” (Gelder 2000, p. 35). Obviously, these two concerns—the questioning of boundaries and the clash between the new and the archaic—are also central to postcolonialism, both in its creative and theoretical aspects. This makes postcolonial horror a fecund field.

But if the overlap between traditional conceptions of horror and the preoccupations of postcolonialism is significant, so are the less obvious tensions between the two. For instance, if one starts with the common dictionary meaning of “horror” as an intense feeling of fear or disgust, one is forced to take into account one’s own position. Disgust is obviously a personal and cultural matter: some religious Hindus, for instance, drink cow urine and put cow-dung smears on their foreheads but are disgusted by a beef steak. Fear, it is argued by some, is more basic, even biological. After all, it can be shown that even newly born chicks fear a hawk or an eagle: evidently, they have not learnt this fear from experience, as they have had no experience of a world outside their nest. This argument is deceptive and revealing.

It is deceptive, as it also has been shown that newly born chicks do not fear a hawk or an eagle: they fear swiftly moving, large shadows (Damasio 2006). An eagle sitting still and unmovable does not evoke fear in them. It is revealing because human beings make a much further transference: not just from swift shadows to a beaked bird of prey, but even from a beaked bird of prey to the

T. Khair (✉)
Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark

“typical” curved noses of the Arab (and, in the past, the Jew). The forms of human fear are complex and cultural, even when their roots might seem to be evolutionary.

Postcolonial horror cannot content itself with simple matters like evolutionary fear because that would further universalize the culturally specific perspectives of a section of Europeans. Colonial horror teems with images of the non-European Other—in terms of color, feature, garb, or artifact, usually with an overlap with the devil or some dangerous beast—as has been noted by a number of scholars. For instance, almost the first image of horror that the reader encounters in Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Carmilla*, a story that is *not* ostensibly about non-white Europeans, is nevertheless “a hideous black woman” (Le Fanu 1995, p. 219). This is inevitable: “a hideous black woman” is frightening to the nineteenth-century cultured white (often female) readers of stories like *Carmilla*, given their cultural assumptions. It is also totally useless in postcolonial horror: no colored postcolonial author can count on, or hopefully even want to count on, the surcharge of horror implanted culturally in the term “black.” Even “hideous” would need to be spelled out and sketched very differently. Perhaps the only term in that matrix of “horror” that would remain effective, given a certain commonality of gender prejudices, is “woman,” though again it can be shown that the dangerous woman in much of European colonial literature also evokes fear by borrowing certain non-European features. Similarly, the horror in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* works with and on anxieties arising from empire, as do texts like *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. Critics like H.L. Malchow (1996) and David Punter (1980) have noted that it is impossible to understand the tensions between Jekyll and Hyde and the discourses (of civilization, culture, the hidden beast in “man,” degeneration, etc.) framing such narratives without reference to the discourses of Empire and colonization.

While the non-European can be used for effective horrific purposes in a colonial Eurocentric context, what does the non-European do when she wants to frighten a reader? After all, the colonial horror writer held up a mirror to his colonial reader, and the reader screamed because she saw a beastly non-European face lurking in that mirror. But if the reader is herself non-European, that beastly non-European face cannot horrify her—by itself. What, then, does the postcolonial author do in order to frighten or horrify a non-European readership?

Let us take something used commonly to evoke fear and horror in colonial Gothic fiction: narratives of non-Western witchcraft, usually overlaid, as they tended to be, with Christian assumptions about the nature (and features) of the Devil. In the colonial Caribbean context, this could and did lead to narratives of Obeah, such as in *Hamel, The Obeah Man* (1827), by an anonymous European writer.

While Obeah could easily be employed to evoke horror in a European or Eurocentric readership, its use cannot be taken for granted by thinking postcolonial writers. After all, in a Caribbean context, the depiction or understanding of Obeah is also a matter of defining the Caribbean. If it is understood entirely in

terms of European rationality, the otherness of the experience is finally subsumed within the European self. If it is explained entirely in terms of African “superstition,” the Caribbean writer ends up secluding large parts of her own experiences or dumping them into the garbage bin of a simplified colonial otherness.

Moreover, as many anthropologists working in Africa have noted, Obeah or Vodou does not necessarily evoke fear or horror in “natives”; instead, they evoke anger or indignation. This is so because Obeah and Vodou are part of a shared and materially lived worldview, and both the practitioner and the victim have access to them. Faced with initial evidence of “witchcraft,” the villager does not shiver in his blankets; he goes and consults another “witch doctor” for an antidote or a counterattack. In short, Obeah and Vodou signify differently—and can evoke different reactions and explanations—across cultures. One of the first to realize this was Jean Rhys, who wrote toward the end of the colonial period in the Caribbean in her classic, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), a Gothicized novel that employed and subverted all the standard elements in Charlotte Brontë’s reluctantly Gothic novel, *Jane Eyre*. How do we pick our way through Rhys’s engagement with the discourse of Obeah/Vodou, given the fact that the discourse, for better and for worse, is central to a perception of the Caribbean, at least in English?

As I have noted earlier, Rhys engages with Obeah/Vodou in a manner that is initially predictable within the colonial context: she attributes it to a “more” African character (Khair 2009). Unlike Takoo in H.G. De Lisser’s *The White Witch of Rosehall* (1958), she is not from Africa, but (like Takoo) she is from “elsewhere” (Martinique, a Francophone Caribbean island) and more “black” than others. It is this woman, Christophine, Antoinette’s nurse, who is attributed “magical” powers by the other women and to whom Antoinette resorts when she wants a potion to make Rochester love her once again. Christophine, unlike Mrs Palmer’s nurse, does not pass on her arts to Antoinette and gives her the potion only with much hesitation. Already, the narrative has established an ambivalent relationship to Obeah: while Rochester and the colonial system see Christophine as both an imposter and a practitioner of Obeah/Vodou, the narrative suggests something closer to a wise woman, with knowledge of traditional cures and herbs. And yet, this is not reduced to “European” rationality, explained away as it is sought to be explained away (as “mesmerism”) in *The White Witch of Rosehall*.

Moreover, the notion of Obeah/Vodou is complicated in a way that is similar and yet very different from what happens in *The White Witch of Rosehall*. In *The White Witch of Rosehall*, Mrs Palmer, the white witch, first comes across as stronger than Takoo, the “African” Obeahman, and then finally there is an attempt to reduce their claim of supernatural “magic” to European rationality and science: hypnotism, mesmerism, and so on. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, too, there is a white “Obeahman,” but his “Obeah” is a version of European rationality. Here *Wide Sargasso Sea* is perhaps the earliest example of a tendency common to postcolonial novels, including Erna Brodber’s *Myal* (1988) and Shani Mootoo’s *Cereus Blooms at Night* (1996): it reconstructs the British or colonial influence as a demonic horror, thus explicitly or implicitly reversing the gaze of European selfhood.

Rochester, as both Antoinette and Christophine recognize in different ways, practices—successfully—“Obeah” on Antoinette. As Antoinette tells Rochester when he insists on calling her Bertha (her deranged mother’s name), “Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name. I know, that’s obeah too” (Rhys 2000, p. 94). In her long discussion with Rochester, Christophine repeatedly suggests that he is manipulating Antoinette in evil and occult ways, though always within the boundaries of cold calculation and reasonability, the latter being one of Rochester’s injunctions to his wife (“promise to be reasonable” (p. 82)).

Hence, Rhys’s novel both uses and complicates “Obeah/Vodou” as a sign of otherness and a device to evoke horror. What is truly horrific in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is not the Obeah of faith and tradition practiced by Christophine, but the Obeah of reason and reasonableness practiced by the European Rochester.

Horror, however, unlike much (but not all) of Magical Realism, depends on otherness, not difference. There is a difference between difference, which is finally assumed on transparency, and otherness. Difference can be overcome, tomorrow or over there, but otherness presumes a point beyond which the self cannot see or reach. It is this, when tinged negatively, that gives rise to horror. Horror, of course, as Emmanuel Levinas (1999) repeatedly points out, is not the only consequence of otherness; transcendence and friendship are also possible. But that is not the option of horror in its generic preferences.

That is the reason why some postcolonial writers also avoid the option of horror—or even the Gothic—as a genre. The assumption, by such writers, is that the other should not be reduced to sheer negativity. This is a valid position, justified by the memory of hundreds of colonial atrocities, as Sven Lindqvist (1996), among others, highlights. But it also comes with a limitation: to assume that everything is finally transparent is to limit oneself to the self-same. It allows no space for otherness. Philosopher Byung-Chul Han considers our age to be an age of excessive positivity and transparency. He notes, “[t]he corollary of hypervisibility is the dismantling of thresholds and borders. Hypervisibility is the telos of the society of transparency” (Han 2017, pp. 40–41).

Horror, as a genre, depends on what lurks beyond thresholds and borders, or what crosses over from them. These borders and thresholds are always culturally located, but the act of transgression—which is used to evoke horror (just one of possible responses) in this particular genre—nevertheless registers that which exceeds the self on the “safe” side of the threshold or border. Hence, it can be argued that postcolonial writing needs to engage with horror, instead of evading it.

At the same time, this engagement can assume different forms. For instance, if one takes up the genre of the ghost story, it can be shown that Indian ghost stories share much with British ghost stories, but also differ in at least one significant respect. While the eruption of a ghost, or its semblance, is often used in British ghost stories to create horror, this may not be the main effect in Indian ghost stories. There is a preponderance of “love stories” in Indian ghost fiction, which, like ghosts in traditional narratives, seem peripherally concerned (if at all)

with the job of invoking terror, fear, or horror. Even in some contemporary Indian ghost stories (Zaidi 2014), desire is not necessarily opposed to death but conjoined with it, the living and the dead fall in love. In keeping with notions of the transmigration of souls, multiple births, and the temporary nature of the Hindu “hell,” even when these are not clearly espoused by the author or narrator, death is not just the end of one life but also the beginning of another. And this other life can be—often is—a material life in this very world. The dead and the living coexist and interrelate in more ways than one in India.

As I point out in a recent paper on the ghost story, there seems to be a tendency in Indian ghost stories to depict ghosts not just as threats and objects of fear but also as possibility (“hope”) and sources of love (Khair 2018). It is not far-fetched to claim this tendency might have something to do with a tenor of thinking that sees souls as migrating from body to body and, while believing in monsters and devilish beings, lacks a “Satan”: the most “satanic” villain in Indian myths, Ravanna, is both learned and partly good, and no God in Indian traditions, not even Rama, is faultless from every perspective. This is just one example of how the instruments of “horror” can be greatly shaped by the culture in which they are applied.

Postcolonial literature—with the partial exception of European settler colonies like Australia or Canada (to which I will return)—mostly employs the effect of horror as one of various elements and seldom assumes the genre of horror as a specific form. What one encounters, as in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, in Neel Mukherjee’s *A State of Freedom* (2017), or in Brian Chikwava’s *Harare North* (2009), is horror in the midst of other generic and thematic concerns—and not just intended to horrify. But horror does have a clearer generic presence in non-European postcolonial societies in the realm of films. Even in India, there has been a tradition of horror pulp films, much of it derived from European forms, but then adapted to native requirements and cultural expectations. Once again, it is difficult to stop with the definition of horror in primal terms—unless of course one takes a lot of Eurocentric assumptions for granted.

For instance, most of the successful horror films of India have also had highly successful musical scores. Even though music is essential to all “masala” (commercial) films, the correspondence of great songs with horror blockbusters is, I think, a good illustration of how these films basically have a gothic tenor. A similar effect cannot be achieved in horror qua horror films, without a great reduction of its efficacy as horror (and one can see this in many B-films from India, including those by Ramsay Brothers). India then has a cinematic genre of “subliminal horror” of the sort that would not work in a mainstream British or Danish cinematic context. I suggest that the “subliminal” in subliminal horror be taken to read not just “what is below the threshold of consciousness” but also to bear an echo of the “sublime” as in the Gothic. The vast categories of what I have dubbed subliminal horror in India can bear and even exult in loud—and sometimes excellent—music because they are basically about the “sublime,” which is not just horrific but also awe-inspiring and vastly beautiful. In that sense, again, the category of postcolonial horror gets slanted in a different direction in postcolonial societies like India.

White settler colonies, like Canada and Australia, seem to offer the most generically “pure” examples of horror fiction in the postcolonial world, perhaps because their horror can be more easily built on the dominant cultural and literary assumptions of the mainstream tradition of colonial and European/ized horror.

Significant works from Australia that largely fit the generic framework of horror fiction include Will Elliot’s *The Pilo Family Circus* (2006) and Kaaron Warren’s *Slights* (2009). However, even here, there are elements that slant horror in culturally transgressive directions: for instance, *The Pilo Family Circus* plays on standard pop-Christian expectations of hell, or rather the borderline between hell and earth, but retains culturally specific Australian features—and one is even tempted to read more than is probably justified into its central twist of a clown who wants to kill himself after putting on *whiteface*.

Similarly, the Canadian horror writer Andrew Pyper’s *The Demonologist* (2013) seems to play almost too obviously on Euro-Christian myths and fears, sometimes even reminding the reader of Dan Brown, and yet it uses John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, not the *Bible*, as the key to its horror of possession and faith. The astute critic can’t help noticing how this choice connects (probably inadvertently) to Gauri Viswanathan’s thesis, in *Masks of Conquest*, about the colonizing role played by English literature, not least Milton, as a safe replacement of direct and administratively problematic Christian proselytization. Again, Michael Rowe’s almost mainstream vampire novel, *Enter Night* (2011), is set in very exact Canadian settings. Hence, it can be said that even postcolonial horror that seeks to stay within some generic bounds ends up transgressing cultural and literary boundaries. After all, what makes postcolonial horror interesting is not its fixed generic propensities, but its drive to question, excavate, and go beyond such propensities.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Damasio, Antonio. 2006. *Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain*. London: Vintage.
- Gelder, Ken. 2000. Global/Postcolonial Horror: Introduction. *Postcolonial Studies* 3 (1): 35–38.
- Han, Byung-Chul. 2017. *The Agony of Eros*. Trans. Erik Butler. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Khair, Tabish. 2009. *The Gothic, Postcolonialism and Otherness: Ghosts from Elsewhere*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- . 2018. Indian Ghosts: A Love Affair. In *The Routledge Handbook to the Ghost Story*, ed. Scott Brewster and Luke Thurston. New York: Routledge.
- Le Fanu, Sheridan. 1995. In *A Glass Darkly*. Ware: Wordsworth Editions. Originally Published 1872.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. 1999. *Alterity and Transcendence*. Trans. M.B. Smith. New York: Columbia University Press. Originally Published 1995.
- Lindqvist, Sven. 1996. *Exterminate All the Brutes*. Trans. J. Tate. London: Granta Books.

- Malchow, H.L. 1996. *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth Century Britain*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Punter, David. 1980. *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*. London: Longman.
- Rhys, Jean. 2000. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. London: Penguin Books. Originally Published 1966.
- Zaidi, Annie. 2014. *Gulab*. Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers.



Conceptualizing Varieties of Space in Horror Fiction

Andrew Hock Soon Ng

A distinctive characteristic of horror literature is its representation of lived space that evokes a sense of uncertainty and dread. From Walpole and Radcliffe's castles, to the antebellum mansions in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1988) and Valerie Martin's *Property* (2003), and to the modern-day condominium in J.G. Ballard's *High-Rise* (1975), lived space subverts common characteristics associated with architecture as "a machine for living" but is instead oppressive and potentially treacherous to humans who occupy it (Le Corbusier 2007, p. 151).¹ Yet, at the same time, lived space is a human product, and, as such, the qualities it acquires, both positive and otherwise, are invariably the result of "the traces of the inhabitants [that] are imprinted in the interior" (Benjamin 1999, p. 9). Horror literature has demonstrated time and again that evil infesting lived space is almost always perpetrated by humans. As a result, lived space will henceforth emanate certain qualities that adversely affect any subject who encounters it. Evidently, Benjamin's notion of leaving traces *via* dwelling works reciprocally: just as humans mark space with their habitation, humans are also marked by the space they inhabit. Lived space "is not simply an empty receptacle, independent of its contents," but is actively participating in the process of dwelling, and its relationship with its contents (including its occupants) is more dialectical than hierarchical (Grosz 1995, p. 92). As symbolized by the parallel destruction of house and owner that concludes a number of horror narratives, such as Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) and John Marks's *Fangland* (2008), the link between lived space and subject is presum-

A. Hock Soon Ng (✉)
Monash University Malaysia, Sunway, Selangor, Malaysia

ably symbiotic: they are integral to each other to the extent that their fates are tied together. As narratives of haunted or accursed domiciles evince, the malevolence inscribed onto a house can linger long after the perpetrator to affect succeeding occupants. In *Beloved*, the slave Sethe warns her daughter, Denver, of precisely such a space, which is profoundly affiliated with her notion of “rememory,” i.e. memory underscored by trauma:

Where I was [Sweet Home, a plantation from which she had escaped] before I came here, that place is real. It’s never going away ... if you go there—you who never was there— ... it will be there for you, waiting for you. So Denver, you can’t never go there. Never. Because even though it’s all over—over and done with—it’s going to always be there waiting for you. (Morrison 1988, p. 36)

Sethe’s point demonstrates the house’s function as a repository of memories, arguably the most profound trace humans imprint onto lived space. But, as with space’s relationship with contents according to Grosz, memories may be contained by, but they also remain independent of, space. Space (or place), as Joëlle Bahloul argues, is “‘inhabited’ by memory. Remembrance is molded into the material and physical structures of [lived] space” (Bahloul 1996, p. 29). Memories, in other words, are what form and give shape to, even as they are encompassed by, place. For this reason, rememory’s imprint on Sweet Home will endure long after the plantation ceases to exist, prevailing deleteriously on anyone, even an individual “who never was there,” who encounters the site in the future. Indeed, such is the premise that fundamentally characterizes all haunted house narratives.

In view of architecture’s prominence in horror literature, it is telling that scholarship continues to acknowledge it only in a narrow sense. Studies informed by feminism, for example, consistently interpret the house in primarily symbolic terms. The house is foremost a metaphor signifying gender politics, whose physical presence matters only insofar as it complements its figurative function.² Studies adopting psychoanalytical criticism, on the other hand, would read space as an extension of the subject’s psychodrama—a kind of canvas on which the subject’s unconscious is projected so that it can be confronted—which emphasizes space’s symbolic over its material import and denies space’s distinction as a representation in its own right. A psychoanalytical reading would almost always analyze the house within the framework of the “uncanny”, a Freudian concept that invariably interfaces the house with the maternal other (Freud 2003). This is limiting, as other functions and meanings of architecture in horror fiction are potentially ignored due to conceptual restriction. Both critical approaches ultimately privilege the figurative role performed by architecture and rarely address its material implications. Hence, to redress this gap in scholarship, this chapter proposes an investigation of lived space in horror literature using three conceptual tools—two of which are borrowed from architectural theory—which clearly prioritize the material over the emblematic.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate that reading space’s materiality—or, as Katherine Schonfield would see it, how space “aggressively reassert[s] itself” *as literally space*—can encourage fresh insights into horror narratives’ representation

of architecture (Schonfield 2000, p. 96). I will introduce an interpretative framework for analyzing space in horror literature that is not based on the uncanny. Instead, I enlist three spatial notions less familiar to horror studies to read narratives featuring a prominent building as setting. The first, the heterotopia, is a spatial notion first developed by Michel Foucault in his essay, "Of Other Spaces" (1986). Although its role in disclosing the fault lines of other spaces by inverting, rivaling, and/or mirroring is mainly symbolic, it is nevertheless a real site of culture, whose materiality is crucial to its capacity for signifying figuratively. As I will demonstrate in my discussion of Shirley Jackson's *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962), while a heterotopic space's ambiguity reflects its propensity as counter-site, it also inclines the space toward a utopic ability to engender subjective empowerment and transcendence. The next framework is Gilles Deleuze's fold (or *pli*), a concept specific to architectural theory. A complex formulation, the fold belongs to the category of what Deleuze calls intensive space, space whose measurement or quantification (like distance, mass, height, and so forth) cannot be established without substantially modifying its nature, so that it will no longer be recognized as intensive. As such, common spatial denominators like "here" and "there" or "up" and "down" are meaningless in space that is folding, whose term suggests they should be understood as "movements" instead, that is, as an event that recasts "inside" as equally "outside" and vice versa. More directly, this event renders spatial sense ambiguous, as my analysis of Mark Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000) will evince. By interpreting the novel's typographical peculiarities as connoting the structural properties of a building, I will demonstrate what folding space entails and the effect this event has on a subject inhabiting such a space. The last architectural framework, Max Pensky's "melancholy object," is an amalgamation of psychoanalytical and material culture theory that inscribes space with a condition usually associated with the unconscious (1993). Revised from Freud's notion of melancholia—which, broadly speaking, is mourning that has become repressed, thus resulting in its unconscious perpetuation—the melancholy object extends the condition beyond the subject to also affect things. More specifically, it is a coping mechanism that compels the subject to recognize the ephemeral nature of existence and to potentially intensify her desire for living at the same time. Unlike Freud's reductive model, Pensky's formulation of melancholia in relation to objects is affirmative and capable, like the heterotopia, of engendering self-transcendence and realization in the subject. I will compare, in my conclusion, the three spatial concepts to demonstrate their use in interpreting architecture in horror fiction.

THE HOUSE AS PLACELESS PLACE

Foucault describes the heterotopia as "a sort of place that lies outside all places and yet is actually localizable ... a place without a place"; using the mirror as an analogy, he explains, "The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and

absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there” (Foucault 1986, p. 24). A “counter-site” whose function is to reflect, contest, and invert actual sites of culture, the heterotopia is, therefore, a real space; at the same time, however, in reflecting real sites, it is curiously unreal and renders the sites it mirrors with a degree of unreality (Foucault 1986, p. 332).³ Accordingly, although distinct from utopia, the heterotopia is nevertheless related to it, as the heterotopia’s counteractive potentials can be channeled toward emancipating lived space from oppression. Importantly, while Foucault’s explication seems to hint at a symbolic function, his insistence on heterotopia’s literality is evident in the bona fide sites he associates with it throughout his essay (Foucault 1986, pp. 24–25). They include the boarding school and the honeymoon hotel as nineteenth-century crisis heterotopias; prisons and psychiatric hospitals as heterotopias of deviance; museums as heterotopias of time; and saunas and hammams as heterotopias of purification. Clearly, the heterotopia’s symbolic function does not preempt its status as an authentic cultural space, whose credibility, however, is compromised by being simultaneously here and elsewhere (a placeless place) or, more precisely, multiple elsewheres. As Foucault notes, heterotopia “juxtapose[es] in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible,” a point he explains by alluding to “the traditional garden of the Persians ... a sacred space that was supposed to bring together inside its rectangle four parts representing the four parts of the world, with a space still more sacred than the others that were like an umbilicus, the navel of the world at its center (the basin and water fountain were there)” (p. 24). Like the Persian garden, the heterotopia is thus a “single real place” capable of figuratively bringing several otherwise incongruent sites into juxtaposition with itself and each other.

As “a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live,” the heterotopia is well suited as a concept for analyzing space in literature (Foucault 1986, p. 23). Unlike Freud’s uncanny, the heterotopia is foremost a spatial notion whose origin is not the subject’s unconscious, but architecture. Since lived space is frequently inflected with secrecy and ambiguity in horror fiction, it is particularly susceptible to interpretations that are predicated on the heterotopia as a conceptual framework.⁴ The haunted house is a case in point: situated in the present while situating the past, it directly embodies the heterotopic quality of being here and elsewhere at the same time. Additionally, that it is often a receptacle of evil and consternating secrets further points to its functions as a heterotopia of both deviance and crisis. What haunts, of course, is a past—and ghosts are, of course, its most obvious embodiment—whose inscription by an originating traumatic event has resulted in a particular place being somehow trapped in time, a scenario usually intimated by its isolation and anachronistic characteristics. An obvious example would be the Bates mansion in Robert Bloch’s *Psycho* (1959): with a matricidal past, and an interior that “had never been modernized” with furniture “straight out of the Gay Nineties,” this iconic architecture is undoubtedly heterotopic in its

insidiousness and apparent timelessness (Bloch 1999, p. 23). Indeed, the Victorian house, with its recognizable mansard roof, is almost always the principal building in twentieth-century American horror literature due to its reputation as “mongrel” architecture (i.e. architecture “deemed eclectic, excessively exotic, or outré”) and as relic of the Gilded Age, “an era of unprecedented corruption” (Burns 2012, pp. 9, 7).⁵ For this reason, the Victorian house is a particularly pertinent “symbol of past corruption still haunting the present. Like the period that spawned it, the house was unclean” (Burns 2012, p. 9).

The Victorian house’s intimation of decadence features in two of Shirley Jackson’s novels, *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962). Epitomizing “moribund modernity,” the Blackwood property’s spatial ambiguity in *Castle* is partly underscored by the adjacent village’s disregard for the mansion’s existence despite its conspicuousness, thereby underscoring its presence with absence, that is, as concurrently here and elsewhere (Burns 2012, p. 8). The villagers direct a combination of apprehension and contempt at one of the mansion’s inhabitants, a murderer (although they have ironically identified the wrong individual). Only a child when she fatally poisoned most of her family, Mary Katherine, or Merricat, has remained in Blackwood despite being shunned by her less affluent neighbors, who keep a watchful distance from her when she makes excursions to the village (Jackson 1991, p. 2). While the crime is undeniable, Merricat’s motive remains unapparent, which begs the question regarding her mental well-being which is further compounded by overt childishness and cold, calculated maturity. More important to my interpretive purpose, however, is that her occupancy indirectly establishes the house as a heterotopia of deviance since it more or less serves as Merricat and her sister’s prison.

Even before communal disavowal rendered it a placeless place, Blackwood was arguably already heterotopic as a counter-site to the village. While adjacent to the village, Blackwood is also its antithesis and symbolic inversion, which bring the two places into juxtaposition. The narrator, Merricat, contrasts the village, dilapidated and “ugly ... [whose] houses and [...] stores seemed to have been set up in contemptuous haste to provide shelter for the drab and the unpleasant,” with the mansion, romanticized as being “brought here perhaps accidentally from some far lovely country where people lived with grace,” or “captured ... and [had since been] held prisoner in the village,” or really not “here” at all but somewhere on the moon (Jackson 1991, p. 9). Merricat’s disdain toward the village and its dwellers reflects her class prejudice, which suggests that contrariety had underscored Blackwood and the village’s relationship since the time the former was built. This point importantly demonstrates that the house’s alleged heterotopic quality is not a projection of the narrator’s possibly warped psyche—that is, space as extension of a subject—but inherent to the architecture itself, independent of the subject. In this regard, while the house may shelter the siblings and offer them protection, it is ultimately impartial toward them—a circumstance Merricat apparently understands as she attempts to win the house’s favor or implore its aid with her

private rituals. While Blackwood's function as heterotopia is evidently symbolic, underscoring this function is its materiality, which brings a degree of status to the village. At the same time, its opulence and singularity also confront the village with lack. Indeed, while the villagers aim their disgust at what the house symbolizes, they nevertheless acknowledge its literality, thereby demonstrating the complementarity between the symbolic and the material that characterizes the heterotopia in *Castle*.

Significantly, Blackwood's unprovoked attack near the end of the novel by the villagers culminates in a fire that consumes much of the architecture and reinforces the house's link with heterotopia. As a ruin thereafter, the house's quality as placeless place is more evident than ever for the following reasons. First and most obviously, it now literalizes the villagers' treatment of it (and its occupants) as an absent presence. Second, in serving as a barricaded, if also limited, refuge for the sisters and keeping them completely hidden from the rest of the community, the ruin has become the realization of Merricat's desire for a place where she can live happily ever after with her sibling—an elsewhere that is simultaneously here and not-here. Related to this is the last reason, whereby the house's destruction has precipitated the villagers' change in attitude toward the sisters due to guilt. In their collective decision to henceforth attend to the girls' needs despite their self-incarceration, the villagers have indirectly but effectively transformed what is otherwise a dilapidated building into a self-sufficient utopia, which, as noted earlier, is one possible articulation of the heterotopia. Accordingly, while already a placeless place due to the significance it represents in the community, Blackwood would nevertheless achieve its clearest expression as a heterotopic site only after it has been reduced to wreckage. But, this is perhaps not so surprising after all, considering the fact that ruins are uniquely affiliated with horror—a genre to which *Castle* broadly belongs—and would often accrue meaning beyond its basic function as backdrop that is mostly insidious, but can sometimes be strangely affirmative, as in the case of Jackson's unsettling novel.

THE SPACE FOLDING CREATES

More than just its ambiguity and unusual qualities, it is the fold's significance as an *event*, rather than a measurement, of space—a point I will clarify shortly—that predisposes it most convincingly as a conceptual tool for interpreting architecture in horror fiction. Developed as a concept for the purpose of interpreting Baroque architecture and labyrinths, Gilles Deleuze's fold (or *pli*) is distinctively a property of materiality and, thus, can only manifest structurally. Like the heterotopia, the fold is also invested with ambiguity in terms of function, as it concurrently conforms to, and departs from, spatial norms. Within the fold, abstractions like outside/inside, near/far, and here/there are reconstituted as movements instead. As Deleuze explains, "The outside is not a fixed limit but a moving matter animated by peristaltic movement, fold and folding that together make up an inside: they are not something other than the outside,

but precisely the inside of the outside” (Deleuze 1988, pp. 96–97). In other words, since the fold’s “inside” is already a constituent—or a movement—of its “outside,” it is, therefore, “the inside of the outside” and vice versa (Deleuze 1988, p. 97). This movement establishes a continuous process of folding, thereby recasting space as an event that can influence subjectivity as well. What is repressed in the subject’s unconscious, for example, can potentially resurface to “[assume] an independent status.... It is as if the relations of the outside folded back to create a doubling, allow a relation to oneself to emerge, and constitute an inside which is hollowed out and develops its own unique dimension: ‘enkrateia’, the relation to oneself that is self-mastery” (Deleuze 1988, p. 100). As “a fold within a fold,” the subject will be “hollowed out,” whereby her alter ego surfaces and exists independently from, as if equal to, her ego (Deleuze 1991, p. 231). As a result, she is henceforth no longer self, as opposed to not-self, or other but *both*—“a doubling ... relation to oneself” (Deleuze 1991, p. 231). Importantly, what this palpably demonstrates is that, within the fold, it is space that asserts influence on the subject, not the other way around. The complementarity between self and other invariably implicates the subject’s sense of identity and self-mastery, which in horror is often substantively compromised.

The difficulty in conceptualizing space as movement, Deleuze surmises, has to do with our emphasis on extensive space (which can be measured) and lack of familiarity with intensive space (which cannot be measured without radically altering its nature, which explains our unfamiliarity with it). *Depth*, for instance, represents a kind of intensive space, according to Deleuze. An object acquires a “unique dimension” due to its definition by depth, and as a result transcends its immediacy as mere object (Deleuze 1988, p. 101). But, while depth enables objects to communicate their distinctiveness, its own definition is indiscernible without being recast as, say, distance, which would therefore also recalibrate it into extensive space. Because depth moreover involves chiaroscuro, which allows it to simultaneously play on visibility and invisibility, it is also an inherently ambiguous spatial category. For this reason, recognizing intensive space requires that we rethink space as perceptual or sensed, rather than quantification or measurement, that is, as “simultaneously the imperceptible and that which can be perceived [or sensed]” (Deleuze 1994, pp. 230–31). It is clear from Deleuze’s spatial diagnosis that the fold is also intensive space, whose apprehension by “the realm of [our] five senses” can only be effected if it is rethought as movement or event (Frichot 2005, p. 65). Or, restating my point differently, to recognize the folding process, we must view space not as passive receptacle with measurable dimension, but an active event that can influence subjectivity. Hélène Frichot echoes a sentiment similar to mine when she compares Deleuze’s concept to “restless inhabitants of [a] house ... that which neither the material nor the immaterial, neither the ground nor upper apartment, can entirely be accounted for. The event wanders about, ghost-like, ungraspable, in-between floors, surveying....” (Frichot 2005, p. 66).

As space whose presence can only be sensed, the fold is arguably more applicable to space in film rather than literature. Nevertheless, there are examples of contemporary horror writings whose representation of architecture, either in its meticulous detail or visual suggestiveness, is manifestly aberrant to possibly enlist the concept of spatial folding. They include Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* (1985) and the more recent *Slade House* (2015) by David Mitchell, both of which potentially implicate the fold to affect not just space but time as well. There is also Haruki Murakami's quaint novella, *The Strange Library* (2014), whose paratextual elements and artwork suggesting children's fiction are incompatible with its foreboding setting and dark and disturbing subject matter (child abuse). Notably, folding space in these texts is communicated less through their content and more their formal experimentations. To clarify, let us consider a horror novel whose striking visual quality resulting from formal manipulation and eccentricity curiously inscribes its representation of architecture with an intimation of dimensions. In Mark Danielewski's novel, *House of Leaves* (2000), the multiple displays of typographical peculiarities effectively transform the reading process into spatial navigation to facilitate the reader's vicarious encounter with the titular house. In this regard, the text must be regarded as *both* written fiction *and* architectural construction, with the view that the formal qualities of the former indirectly implicate the latter. For instance, pages displaying text boxes bearing either juxtaposing contents or images visually resemble walls with either central windows or mounted pictures; one page even has a text box that is completely darkened to possibly denote nighttime (Danielewski 2000, p. 144). Then there are pages divided into sections ranging between two and six, whose contents are printed sideways or upside down to suggest room division and the often conflicting stances adopted by a house's various occupants as they are separately located in their individual compartments. Some pages have words tucked into a corner or arranged to roughly form an image of the staircase and the dining room (pp. 429, 431). The novel's middle pages, on the other hand, contain only a few words each that are, furthermore, shaped into a tiny square and located exactly in the center; taken together, they visually recall the house's pinnacle, a loft with a skylight (pp. 442–60). Arguably, even the interchanging states between tenanted and untenanted commonly characterizing the contemporary house are perceptibly replicated, respectively, in pages whose disorganized layout is expressed in texts that are jumbled, oddly located, completely blank, and/or superimposed onto each other (all of which suggests clutter or messiness, or vacated space). Meanwhile, the regular change of font type and/or size potentially symbolizes the different lives whose dwellings have left an impression over the years. The warranty of this interpretation is likely reinforced further by the novel's inclusion of letters, itineraries, schedules, journal entries, poems, and even a bar of music—all of which are personal discourses that shed light on the divergent personalities of the house's sundry occupants (p. 479). Clearly, the novel's atypical typography and layout are not purposeless

experimental gestures but are meant to illustrate a house and its contents in visual terms while seamlessly moving between language and architecture. Perhaps the strongest indication, however, of such an intent concerning form is the novel's title itself. Synonymous to "leaves" is the word "pages," thus suggesting that the novel is to be read as if it is architecture, albeit one constructed from pages.

The observations in the preceding paragraph, of course, beg the question of how Danielewski's novel implicates the Deleuzian fold. Paul Harris's description of folding architecture presents a starting point; according to Harris, the concept privileges "material heterogeneity [and] creates continuities between site and structure, implementing conceptual designs that entrain perception to follow patterns that connect outside and inside, both physically and psychologically.... In such architecture, where the outside is a fold of the inside, the conceptual and perceptual become increasingly indiscernible" (Harris 2005, p. 37). With some modification and taken out of context, Harris's postulation can ostensibly be applied to the house in Danielewski's narrative, whereby the perception of the novel's unusual and innovative typographical features is "entrained" textually to replicate architecture's "material heterogeneity" and "conceptual designs." His notion of "continuities between site and structure" can be taken to mean, in this context, the continuum between language and architecture, that is, the formal characteristics of fiction as representing architecture's structural ones. Unlike Harris's celebration of Watts Towers in his essay however, the folding process of Danielewski's title house endangers its occupants, even annihilating them in some cases. For this reason, the urban legend about a monster hidden deep within the labyrinthine house is not entirely untrue, except for the fact that the monster is not in, *but is*, the house, whose inexplicable continuous structural expansion produces more and more uncharted parts to entice curious explorers who will inevitably become lost forever in its endless maze. On the other hand, when considering that spatial folding also "unfolds" the subject, it is possible to read the monster as the return of the subject's repression in the guise of a potent alter ego that eventually takes over the subject. Accordingly, as the other, or not-self, grows in prominence, the self is increasingly silenced, almost to the point of erasure, which is allegorized by the subject's entrapment while exploring the house's immeasurable, cavernous dimensions—arguably an allusion to the unconscious.

In Danielewski's novel, the house's capacity for symbolic function is developed from what its literality reveals—a literality expressed as text whose psychological and architectural form can be interpreted through the Deleuzian fold, a concept that equally encourages a dialogue between architecture and subjectivity. If there is one palpable shortcoming with such a framework, it is its limited application to horror literature (not film) due to the fact it works best with narratives whose formal characteristics are manifestly peculiar.

THE MELANCHOLY OF MONUMENTS

Originating with Freud, the unconscious mental condition melancholia was further revised by theorists like Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, Julia Kristeva, and Max Pensky, whose model demonstrates how objects can also acquire melancholy. To understand how melancholy objects relate to architecture, we must first investigate Freud's formulation. Introduced in his essay, "Mourning and Melancholia" (Freud 1957), melancholia refers to a process of mourning the ego has repressed to ensure its protraction. The result is the subject's "exclusive devotion to [his] mourning, which leaves nothing over for other purposes or other interest" (Freud 1957, p. 244). Although melancholia is precipitated by mourning over "*whom* [a subject] has lost" (the "loved object"), it is foremost impelled by "*what* he has lost in him" due to his "establish[ment of] an *identification* ... with the abandoned object," thereby transforming "object-loss ... into ego-loss" (Freud 1957, pp. 249, 245, emphasis in original). Bluntly put, what ultimately motivates melancholia is narcissism; the ego's purpose of incorporating the loved object into the unconscious is, ironically, self-preservation, that is, to prevent part of the self from being sacrificed as the result of losing the loved object. Invariably "altered by [this] identification," the ego is henceforth also invested with "ambivalence" symptomized as "extraordinary diminution in [the subject's] self-regard, an impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale" (Freud 1957, pp. 249, 251, 246). Notably, this symptom indirectly "points to a loss in regard to his ego" while it tacitly hints at a connection between the subject and loved object that dialectically links love, hate, and guilt (Freud 1957, p. 247).⁶ In other words, the subject's constant self-depreciation expressed in terms of being unworthy of, or qualitatively unequal to, the lost loved object is indicative of the subject's unconscious integration of the loved object into his ego; but the display of self-reproach also reflects a fractured subjectivity resulting from his ego's invasion by an other. In this way, unconscious love becomes compromised by unconscious hate, which induces unspoken guilt in the ego that reinforces unconscious love and ad infinitum. For Kristeva (1987), it is fundamentally this loop in the psyche that underscores the relationship between melancholia and depression.

Characterized by a single unconscious process, that is, incorporation, and affecting only the subject, Freud's melancholia is conspicuously suited for reading horror literature, especially narratives involving supernatural possession or psychological instability, but only in terms of character analysis.⁷ To extend melancholia's relevance to interpreting lived space in horror texts, we must turn to Max Pensky's "melancholy object," which additionally draws on material culture theory and Walter Benjamin's thesis on dwelling. Largely informed by Freud's model, Pensky adds another unconscious process, that is, projection, which then allows melancholia's effect to extend to, by being inscribed onto, everyday things, thus transforming pedestrian items into *memento moris* as their use value is recast as emotional value. Because lived space, especially the

house, constitutes a commonplace object that is nonetheless often profoundly individual and personal, it signifies particularly well as a melancholy object. Admittedly, the way in which Pensky's model operates seems strikingly similar to the uncanny, which also involves the subject projecting his unconscious onto lived space, thereby endowing it with an insidious quality. But, as I will demonstrate, unlike the uncanny, melancholy projected onto lived space can linger as a kind of architectural "unconscious" long after the termination of its original source. This implies that, while its genesis points to a subject, melancholy can acquire an existence independent of the subject to become a property inherent to architecture. To illustrate my point, I will again turn to Morrison's *Beloved*, whose analysis will further clarify the significance of Pensky's concept for architecture.

The concept of melancholy has admittedly been applied to *Beloved* by scholarship before but only with regard to its characters, especially the protagonist, Sethe, whose melancholia is engendered by an act of infanticide she subsequently represses and thus directly relegates the process of mourning to the unconscious.⁸ My interpretation, while based on a similar hypothesis, is focused instead on how melancholy can also be inherited by an object—in this case, Sethe's home, 124 Bluestone (or 124)—which, as a result, is transformed into a potentially lasting monument of grief. Until the appearance of a mysterious girl who bears the name of Sethe's murdered third child, 124 (hence, the significance of the address) is haunted by a ghost so virulent that Sethe's two sons "snatched up [their] shoes and crept away," never to return (Morrison 1988, p. 3). Despite apprehending that the ghost is just a baby and notwithstanding the girl's telling name, Sethe does not seem to register recognition of her presumed, singular identity, even though the haunting ceases with the girl's arrival (p. 13). The implication of trauma, which Cathy Caruth defines as "an experience that immediate understanding cannot permit" or more precisely an "unclaimed experience," is unmistakable here, whereby the gap in Sethe's consciousness for refusing to admit her act of infanticide also introduces ambiguity into the narrative (Caruth 1996, p. 11). Yet, that she remains in a house possessed by such an angry spirit and takes in a runaway, whose presence will eventually consume all her time and energy, possibly suggest a degree of self-punishment indicative of melancholia. Sethe's condition is arguably more than the mourning she has repressed, *but repressed mourning over a death she refuses to claim*: melancholia underscored by trauma that situates her (and the reader) between knowing and unknowing. It is, in other words, not so much the memory of Beloved's death (mourning and then melancholia), but *how* it happened, that is disavowed by Sethe, thereby culminating in her situation. Her ego effects misrecognition while facilitating unconscious mourning by projecting her lost loved object onto the space of her home—hence its reconfiguration into a melancholy object.

When an object is invested with melancholia, its relationship with the subject becomes underscored by an ambivalence that Pensky terms "melancholy dialectic" and whose effect on the subject he describes as a sense of vacillation

between “immanent and transcendent moments in the human experience” (Pensky 1993, p. 21). As Gareth Millington explains, melancholy dialectic induces “simultaneous intensification of subjectivity and [its] absorption into the world of objects” (Millington, p. 545). Inferred from this observation is another important distinction between Pensky and Freud’s formulations of melancholia (and, at the same time, aligns Pensky more closely with Kristeva), in that a melancholy object does not reduce the subject but is a means by which he can achieve self-transcendence and realization to enhance his signification as both being-in-itself and being-in-the-world. As Pensky notes:

If the melancholy subject “produces” melancholy objects, then those objects themselves also constitute a world, a realm of objects of contemplation that in turn constitute the melancholy way of seeing. Between melancholy subject and melancholy objects, this way of seeing subsists in the dialectical interval between these two constituted moments. The form of vision that draws the speculative subject ever deeper into the interrogation of the creaturely also establishes the realm of the objective as a complex puzzle awaiting its decipherment. (p. 16)

To an extent, *Beloved* exemplifies this observation in many ways. As Sethe’s melancholy object, 124 assumes her dual condition of melancholia and trauma, thus facilitating its misrecognition by her ego. That the sense of self-improvement symptomatizing melancholia is concurrently redirected to the building is evident in Sethe’s willingness to put up with its sinister characteristic. Whether this is out of duress or choice, which her explanation that the house has “cost [her life] too much” equally signifies, it bespeaks of an obvious attachment indirectly intimating Sethe’s unconscious dependence on the house to sustain her ego’s misrecognition that her departure would otherwise overturn (Morrison 1988, p. 15). Remaining in 124 sufficiently relieves her subjectivity to experience reinvigoration (enhanced being-in-itself). Indeed, when the reader first meets Sethe, she is working again and busy with Denver’s upbringing, both indicating a degree of restoration despite her disinclination toward any relationship except with her daughter. She has, as Pensky would argue, cultivated a “melancholy way of seeing,” which is paradoxically predicated on “intense feelings of loss, sadness and shame” and a heightened appreciation for life and the “complex puzzle” characterizing an objective world (Millington 2005, p. 545).

Although the melancholy quality of space is engendered by a subject, it also, in a curious inversion specific to architecture, objectifies him. Sethe’s objectification constitutes a melancholy way of seeing in that her amplified resolve to live presumes the dissolution of the binary structure underscoring subjectivity. Accordingly, the self-other distinction is no longer operable in Sethe since she is now a content, and thus an integrant, of her objective world, which in this case is her home. Melancholy, in this regard, is more an architectural property, and hence is unlike the uncanny, whose originating point is indefatigably the subject, hence Anthony Vidler’s statement that “there is no such thing as

uncanny architecture” (Vidler 1992, p. 12). As Peter Schwenger posits, “The realization that one has become an object is here a *vanitas*, a melancholy reminder of the futility of amassing material things” (2006, p. 76). “But to become an object,” he contends, “may also be a positive aspiration. Beyond ownership, there is the lure of a more complete and intimate possession of an object. This is possession in the same sense that an alien spirit enters a human being, only reversed: a human spirit entering an alien entity” (Schwenger 2006, p. 76). It is intriguing that Schwenger’s observation seems to describe Sethe’s dialectical relationship with 124. Fashioned by her unconscious process of imparting part of self to it, the melancholy house not only helps disburse her unrecognized loss but thereafter embodies that loss as well. In this way, while the melancholy may originate with Sethe, it also exists independently from her to become a monument that will survive her and whose endurance will thereby memorialize her grief indefinitely.

CONCLUSION

Several important points of comparison among the three spatial types discussed in this essay can be observed: first, the fold consistently leads to the implication that space in horror fiction is corrupted, dangerous, and reductive of the subject. Although the others demonstrate similar inclination, they are usually more subversive than harmful and can brook a potentially affirmative significance. The utopic propensity and the capacity to intensify the subject’s desire to live, for instance, respectively underscore the heterotopia and melancholy object’s function to empower and motivate subjective transcendence as well. Second, as the examples of Merricat and Sethe demonstrate, occupying lived space in horror stories is a process of constant negotiation, not domination; only as such can subject and space develop a symbiotic connection that allows each other’s impression to be left. For subject/space relationship to be effective, in other words, its structure must be dialectical, not binaristic. As “The Fall of the House of Usher,” among others, demonstrates, failure to respect the otherness of architecture can presumably compromise the subject’s dwelling and identity to culminate in self-dissolution. Third, in terms of function, all three types of space share a similar characteristic in that they can expose—either by reflecting (heterotopia), turning inside out (the fold), or inscribing onto things (melancholy object)—dimensions of subjectivity unknown to the self. As inferred from the first point and exemplified in *House of Leaves*, exposure effected by the fold often results in the self’s reduction or fragmentation in horror narratives. It is not the unconscious that necessarily constitutes what signifies as the hidden in this case, as a consciously kept secret can equally serve. Finally, while the application of spatial concepts to horror fiction in order to read its representation of lived space invariably yields figurative implications for architecture, this is often achieved by considering the significance of architecture’s materiality as well, not at its expense.

NOTES

1. While my view of “lived space” is largely informed by Henri Lefebvre’s definition, there is nevertheless one important difference. Like Lefebvre, I view lived space as that which imagination experiences and “seeks to change and appropriate ... overlay[ing] physical space [by] making symbolic use of its objects. Thus representational spaces may be said, though again with certain exceptions, to tend towards more or less coherent systems of nonverbal symbols and signs” (Lefebvre 1991, p. 39). It is, in short, spatial experienced as and in everyday practice. However, lived space is not just “dominated—and hence—passively experienced” space, but accommodates a range of qualities, including dominating and active, as my analysis of some Horror works will show (Lefebvre 1991, p. 39).
2. For examples of the house as female entrapment, see Gilbert and Gubar (2000) and Kate Ferguson Ellis (1989); for the house as female empowerment, see Showalter (1991, 1998).
3. For a discussion of the paradox in Foucault’s concept, see Knight (2017).
4. Only few studies have applied the heterotopia to reading Horror; they include essays by Botting (1994, 2012) and Davies (2008).
5. The appearance of the Victorian house is not, of course, limited to the twentieth-century American Horror fiction, as evident in Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839), whose house was inspired by a mansion belonging to Hezekiah Usher, America’s first known bookseller, and Hawthorne’s *The House of Seven Gables* (1851).
6. Kristeva (1987) would later redefine this circumstance as depression.
7. The former is, in fact, often interpreted as an allegory of the latter by scholars since both themes similarly revolve around the invasion of the self by an other.
8. See Luckhurst (1996) and Tettenborn (2006) for examples. Worthy (2017), on the other hand, is among the few who apply the concept to reading someone else, that is, Denver, Sethe’s other daughter.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bahloul, Joëlle. 1996. *The Architecture of Memory: A Jewish-Muslim Household in Colonial Algeria, 1937–1962*. Trans. Catherine du Peloux Ménagé. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Benjamin, Walter. 1999. *The Arcades Project*. Trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. London: Belknap Press.
- Bloch, Robert. 1999. *Psycho*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Botting, Fred. 1994. Power in the Darkness: Heterotopias, Literature and Horror Labyrinths. *Genre* 26: 25382.
- . 2012. In Horror Darkly: Heterotopia, History, Culture. In *A New Companion to the Horror*, ed. David Punter, 13–24. Malden: Blackwell.
- Burns, Sarah. 2012. ‘Better for Haunts’: Victorian Houses and the Modern Imagination. *American Art* 26 (3): 2–25.
- Caruth, Cathy. 1996. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Danielewski, Mark Z. 2000. *House of Leaves*. London: Transworld Publishers.
- Davies, Anne. 2008. Guillermo Del Toro’s *Cronos*: The Vampire as Embodied Heterotopia. *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 25 (5): 395–403.

- Deleuze, Gilles. 1988. *Foucault*. Trans. S. Hand. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- . 1991. "The Fold". Trans. Jonathan Strauss. *Yale French Studies* 80: 227–247.
- . 1994. *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ellis, Kate Ferguson. 1989. *The Contested Castle: Horror Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology*. Urbana: The University of Illinois Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1986. "Of Other Spaces". Trans. Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 16 (1): 22–26.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1957. Mourning and Melancholia. In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, vol. XIV, 243–258. London: Hogarth Press.
- . 2003. *The Uncanny*. Trans. David McLintock. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Frichot, Hélène. 2005. Stealing into Gilles Deleuze's Baroque House. In *Deleuze and Space*, ed. Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert, 61–79. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Gilbert, Sandra, and Susan Gubar. 2000. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination*. Yale: Yale University Press.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. 1995. *Space, Time, and Perversion*. New York: Routledge.
- Harris, Paul A. 2005. To See with the Mind and Think through the Eye: Deleuze, Folding Architecture, and Simon Rodia's Watts Towers. In *Deleuze and Space*, ed. Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert, 16–35. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Jackson, Shirley. 1991. *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*. New York: Quality Paperback Book Club.
- Knight, Kevin. 2017. Placeless Place: Resolving the Paradox of Foucault's Heterotopia. *Textual Practice* 31 (1): 141–158.
- Kristeva, Julia. 1987. "On the Melancholic Imaginary". Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. *New Formations* 3: 5–18.
- Le Corbusier. 2007. *Towards a New Architecture*. Trans. John Goodman. Los Angeles: Getty Publication.
- Lefebvre, Henri. 1991. *The Production of Space*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Malden: Blackwell.
- Luckhurst, Roger. 1996. 'Impossible Mourning' in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Michèle Roberts's *Daughters of the House*. *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 37 (4): 243–260.
- Millington, Gareth. 2005. Meaning, Materials and Melancholia: Understanding the Palace Hotel. *Social & Cultural Geography* 6 (4): 531–549.
- Morrison, Toni. 1988. *Beloved*. London: Picador.
- Pensky, Max. 1993. *Melancholy Dialectics: Walter Benjamin and the Play of Mourning*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Schonfeld, Katherine. 2000. *Walls Have Feelings: Architecture, Film and the City*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Showalter, Elaine. 1991. *Sister's Choice: Tradition and Change in American Women's Writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 1998. *A Literature of their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Shwenger, Peter. 2006. *The Tears of Things: Melancholy and Physical Objects*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- Tettenborn, Éva. 2006. Melancholia as Resistance in Contemporary African American Literature. *Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States* 21 (3): 102–121.
- Vidler, Anthony. 1992. *Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Worthy, Jimmy. 2017. ‘She Comes in the Daytime’: The Unconscious Work of Melancholia in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*. In *On Trauma and Traumatic Memory*, ed. Bootheina Majoul, 87–104. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press.



Toward an Acoustics of Literary Horror

Matt Foley

If, as Fred Botting argues, experiencing horror involves opening up to a “realm of dissolution where language is undone, bodies decompose and all the known contours of reality collapse,” then such an assault upon the senses should no longer be regarded as solely or even primarily visual (Botting 2015b, p. 94). At least, this is the premise that is encouraging scholars to begin to explore literary horror’s hitherto underappreciated acoustics.¹ Almost since its inception, I argue here, the literature of horror has rendered myriad voices of excess, where unsettling sonic and visual registers combine to create synesthetic forms of sensory assault. For the psychoanalytic and cultural critic Mladen Dolar, the awfulness of the voice, in particular, is to be found in its “presymbolic” character that defies the symbolic structures of language (Dolar 2006, p. 26). Dolar and his counterpart in the Slovenian School of Psychoanalysis Slavoj Žižek have predominantly read the role of the object voice in horror film. In this chapter, I will consider an eclectic range of literary horrors and chart a development of the horror acoustic from the Gothic Romance until today. With an emphasis upon aesthetics and technology, I will read these soundscapes as they are staged, respectively, in the male paranoiac horror of the early nineteenth century and in modern and contemporary literary horror fiction. In pursuing my argument, I consider stagings of the presymbolic or excessive voice across several key scenes of horror, such as the cries that roll “like subterranean thunder” through the Inquisitorial vaults of Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), Norman’s ventriloquizing of his mother’s voice in Robert Bloch’s *Psycho* (1959), the satanic ventriloquism that produces Regan’s guttural voice in *The Exorcist* (1971) and the echoing labyrinth of Mark Z. Danielewski’s

M. Foley (✉)
Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK

House of Leaves (2000) (Maturin 1998, p. 187). My central contention is that the sonic horror of these tales is produced when the disruptive character of the voice exceeds its source and redoubles the monstrosity of its bearer. As Isabella van Elferen has noted, monstrosity “is a noisy business,” and there are myriad examples in film, music and video games from which we may draw to explore this acoustic (2016, p. 308). The aim of this chapter is to consider more deeply the acoustics of a selection of horror writing that may be taught in the academy and to foreground, in particular, the role that monstrous voices play in these textual soundscapes.

LISTENING FOR LITERARY HORROR: *HOUSE OF LEAVES* AS CASE STUDY

A close consideration of textualized sound in horror literature involves a sensory recalibration. The critic must move away from reading primarily visual registers of gore, porous corporeality and excess toward focusing their scholarly attention upon the auditory soundscape. Thus, this reading practice necessitates a somewhat paradoxical tuning of the auditory ear of the reader toward the soundscape of a body of literature that is defined often by its corporeal, visual excesses. A way of conceptualizing this change in emphasis from the visual to the auditory is to regard this critical turn as engendering a moment of anamorphosis. That is, a change in perception that suddenly throws into relief something hitherto overlooked. What emerges seems to have been hiding in plain sight—or, at least, within earshot—all along in horror fiction’s soundscapes.² Once literary acoustics are recognized and charted, relationships between sonic and visual horrors begin to crystalize and literary horror novels may be read more persuasively as being self-aware of the importance of sound to maintaining their unsettling effects.

An important example of an explicit reflection upon sound and its disorientating effects in the horror aesthetic is found in Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*. A labyrinthine and ergodic novel, Danielewski’s text consists of several competing metanarratives that are topologically and experimentally arranged into a series of meandering footnotes, concrete blocks of prose and, at times of heightening suspense, pages that are taken up by just an alluring phrase or two. As part of what Fred Botting has recognized as the novel’s “[p]ostmodern play” that “prefigures fictional immersion in digital technologies heralding the end of an era of print, meaning, reference and reality,” its narratives consciously explore soundscapes and their complex—perhaps, we sense, even irresolvable—relationships to space (Botting 2015a, p. 241).³ Yet, these explorations of sound need to be read with caution as they form part of the novel’s broader tendency to satirize academic discourse. The central found manuscript of *House of Leaves*—that is, *The Navidson Record*—is penned by a blind scholar named Zampanó whose work, of dubious quality and rigor, has been sidelined and rejected by the academy. Zampanó provides an account of a found footage

video that he tells us showed a family become enveloped by a haunted house whose very structure presents the “confounding impossibility of an interior dimension greater than an exterior one” (Danielewski 2000, p. 55). Alluding, at least in part, to the imaginative panoramas that one may discover through the act of reading, Zampanó begins chapter five of his account of the Navidson tape by arguing that “[i]t is impossible to appreciate the importance of space in *The Navidson Record* without first taking into account the significance of echoes” (p. 41). Firstly surveying its etymological and mythic resonances, Zampanó goes on to characterize the echo as a conceptual category that provides “an effective means to evaluate physical, emotional and thematic distances present in *The Navidson Record*” (p. 109). His argument seems contradictory, however, as echoes are perceived in this line of thought to be paradoxically “confined to large spaces.” In turn, the conceptual metaphor of the echo could not, in this light, illuminate the effects (or affects) elicited in the subject by those warped, claustrophobic corridors of a haunted house. Instead, in order to understand the ways in which space is “radically distorted” in the Navidson house, Zampanó argues, we must leave behind the echo for “the concept of a labyrinth” (p. 109).

Zampanó’s conclusions seem misguided, however, as toward the end of his initial conceptual account of the echo he stumbles upon a degree of profundity and insight regarding its potential for inducing the kind of horror that we would associate with claustrophobia. His falling back upon the spatial metaphor of the labyrinth, if intuitive, thus becomes particularly surprising in this context as he has already implied that the synesthetic qualities of reading horror itself can be understood through the image of a sensory echo chamber and that two elements of this metaphor relate, respectively, to terror and horror. Take the following two passages as examples of each quality. Terror is foregrounded in the first and horror in the second:

Ironically, hollowness only increases the eerie quality of otherness inherent in any echo. Delay and fragmented repetition create a sense of another inhabiting a necessarily deserted place.

...

An echo, while implying an enormity of a space, at the same time also defines it, limits it, and even temporarily inhabits it. (Danielewski 2000, p. 46)

We can infer from the first lines cited above that through its experimental form, *House of Leaves* itself constructs the empty place in which “hollow” echoes of alterity are rendered to produce an uncanny and ghostly effect that deepens the reader’s impression of a more pervasive and malign otherness. As the second passage implies, this echo chamber may become monstrous: it suggests a vastness of space—the eternal, postmodern play of the signifier generates this sense of immensity in *House of Leaves*—and yet it also “inhabits” and “limits” such an experiential panorama. The structuring sonic metaphor of the echo, then, suggests that terror—the uncanny, the ghostly—and a more overwhelming

sense of an enormity of space await the reader during their explorations into Danielewski's hypertext. Indeed, as Fred Botting has noted, *House of Leaves* may be read productively as a horrorspace inhabited and symbolized by a "monstrosity" that "spreads from void to house to head to text" (Botting 2015a, p. 243). After all, confirming the monstrosity of *House of Leaves*, it is a guttural growl that emanates from the vast, darkening vistas of the Navidson house that first signals a change in register from terror to horror (Danielewski 2000, p. 84).

The immensity of these spaces, then, renders the Navidson house an echo chamber of horrors. That monstrosity lives within the dark and long hallways of *House of Leaves* suggests that the visual corollary of this disorientating soundscape is a horror familiar to the Gothic tradition. Taking this view, of course, involves putting aside the premise that the echo—as voice—is purely ethereal in nature and that such immateriality characterizes it as a polar opposite to the corporeal, bodily presence of monstrosity. As I hope to show below, the voice itself has certain presymbolic, primordial and uncanny registers that make its more monstrous incarnations important auditory counterparts to visual horrors. In taking the object voice, as it is known in psychoanalysis, as the primary focus in reading this acoustics of horror, we may begin to move beyond a reading that focuses upon onomatopoeic grotesqueries—evident in the gory acoustics of "splatterpunk" horror or, more pertinently here, in the "growl" of the monster in Danielewski's novel⁴—and instead read the alterity inherent in the voice as one of the central structuring principles of literary horror itself.

THE MONSTROUS VOICE

As has been recognized by emerging critical literature in the field, the sonic dimensions of literary horror are replete with a series of disembodied, hybrid and abject voices, possessions, monstrous excesses, and animalistic a-symbolic moans that pose an imminent threat to the identity of their auditor. While recent work on sonic Gothic or horror has been spearheaded by the critical writings, in particular, of Isabella van Elferen, there has long been an association between the voice and horror in theories propounded by those scholars who form the Slovenian School of Lacanian Psychoanalysis. Most notably, both Dolar and Žižek have sought to use the horror aesthetic as a medium through which to exemplify their understandings of the object voice. That is, the status of the voice—like its counterpart in the order of the imaginary, the gaze—as related "both to the body (to the sonorous materiality originating in the body, notwithstanding its silent nature) *and* to language (to the signifying process, in its status as the latter's by-product) *without* completely belonging to *either*, since it is located in the field where they intersect" (Sacido-Romero and Mieszkowski 2015, p. 13, original emphases). As with the impossible source of the gaze that remains unseen and yet so powerfully structures the psychoanalytic subject's borders of self, so, too, does the voice in its purest form as an object remain unheard. In his increasingly influential account of orality, *A Voice*

and *Nothing More* (2006), Dolar goes as far as to argue that, however paradoxically, silence is an example *par excellence* of the alterity inherent in the voice as object: it is present but unsourceable, pervasive but uncanny, homely and yet menacing and claustrophobic. In horror fictions, then, it is not merely an auditory aesthetics of silence and suspense—the so-often staged heightening of a victim’s senses before the horror at the heart of the film is revealed to them—that is of interest to both horror scholars and Lacanians alike. It is the ways in which the voice may be made monstrous and even “thrown” between subjects that so fascinates them.

For instance, in a critical reading that forms part of the film *The Pervert’s Guide to Cinema* (Dir: Sophie Fiennes 2006), and that takes its lead from the thought of Michel Chion, Žižek pays close attention to Norman Bates’s ventriloquizing of his mother’s super-egoic voice in *Psycho* (1960). Such a “throwing” of the voice is crucial to Hitchcock’s misdirection of the viewer as initially it seems that Norma is alive; and, even when her death is revealed, Norman’s ventriloquism of his mother’s voice *as thought* in the film’s final scene still horrifies. This auditory horror seems almost supernatural in origin: its source—Norman’s supposed illness—not sufficient to produce the pervasive and berating maternal voice. Indeed, Norman is silent in this final scene and the mother’s voice becomes entirely disembodied: a move that is suggestive of the maternal voice obliterating Norman’s subjectivity. The ending to the film *Psycho* is drawn almost exactly from the novel that preceded it in 1959, and Hitchcock’s understanding of the horror of the voice owes much to the imagination of its author Robert Bloch.⁵ More broadly, that the “throwing” of the voice is a central motif of sonic horror testifies to its disconcerting status as an alien other. Indeed, as psychoanalytic theories consistently note, the effect of the voice seems perpetually to exceed its source or cause. Further prominent examples in the horror pantheon include the recurring figure of the ventriloquist’s dummy that comes to talk for itself and,⁶ as I now read more closely, the possessed girl who swears like a demon, vomits and even barks in William Peter Blatty’s *The Exorcist*.

In reading literary horror, critics may in the future consider its aesthetics of orality in some of the ways that have come to define our understandings of more corporeal monstrosities. Think, for instance, of the patchwork of body parts that are sewn together in Victor Frankenstein’s laboratory: that is, the drawing together of his creature’s corporeality that has survived in so many adaptations of Shelley’s novel. Such a construction of monstrosity may be paralleled with the staging of Regan’s voice in *The Exorcist*. Resonating with the animal-human hybridity that comes to characterize Victor’s creature in *Frankenstein* (1818/1831), the auditory horrors that emanate from Regan in Blatty’s novel are a form of sonic vivisection, which are not only discernible in the film version of *The Exorcist* (1973) but, too, in its original literary text (1971). The demon, Pazuzu, who possesses her—and proclaims its name to be “nowonmai”—is not the only voice to take hold of Regan. She barks and mews as Pazuzu screams a series of obscenities at both her mother Chris and the

exorcists Fathers Karras and Dyer who have come to vanquish the demon. The auditory qualities of Regan's voice and its obscene content combine to form a sonic monstrosity:

"The sow is *mine*" she bellowed in a coarse and powerful voice. "She is mine! Keep away from her! She is *mine*!"

A yelping laugh gushed up from her throat, and then she fell back as if someone had pushed her. She pulled up her nightgown, exposing her genitals. "*Fuck me! Fuck me!*" she screamed at the doctors, and with both her hands began masturbating frantically.... Then again she was twisting from side to side, moaning meaningless syllables over and over. And abruptly sat up with eyes staring wide with helpless terror.

She mewed like a cat.

Then barked.

Then neighed. (Blatty 2007, pp. 125–26, original emphases)

Having read this scene in detail elsewhere so as to emphasize its a-symbolic and hybrid acoustic registers,⁷ it suffices for me to suggest here that such sonic horrors play upon the uniqueness of the voice as both a carrier of obscenities and an aberration itself. The montage—or splicing—of these sounds into one literary aesthetic demonstrates an intermedia approach to producing this monstrous voice. Further suggesting its alterity, a ceremony must occur if the voice in its radical form is to be exorcized. For David Punter, in the Gothic, "the ceremonial ... is the Other of transgression. What would 'otherwise' have been transgression is now allowed; ceremony supersedes the law, permits a breach through which things may flow" (Punter 1999, p. 41). From this perspective, Blatty stages the possession and subsequent exorcism of Regan—and hence creates his monster—to demonstrate and reassert the power of faith and religion. The ending of *Psycho*, in fact, provides a more accurate portrayal of the lasting effect of the object voice than is achieved in *The Exorcist*. Norman's condition eschews psychologization and the monstrous voice leaves a remainder that cannot be exorcized. Norma as voice comes to irreconcilably take control of what was once Norman: "if she sat there without moving," Bloch's narrator tells us on the novel's final page, "they'd know that she was sane, sane, sane" (2007, p. 185). This power of the voice to horrify and terrify has sustained itself in horror literature since its very inception.

THE VOICE IN THE GOTHIC ROMANCE

As I turn to analyzing below, the influence of technology certainly plays a role in structuring the polyphonic forms that these sonic horrors so often take. Indeed, in his reading of an acoustemology of the Gothic, Justin Edwards has argued convincingly that "[a]uditory experience and audio technology afford unique forms of embodiment" so that "Gothic spaces are also unlocked through the keys of auditory experience" (Edwards 2015, pp. 53, 59). It would be wrong, however, to assume that the sonic dimensions of modern literary

horror are so pronounced purely given the emergence of recording and mixing technologies in the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, respectively. In fact, the voice as an object of horror is well established in the Gothic Romance from almost its inception in the late eighteenth century. Indeed, Barbara Judson has already documented that the first American Gothic novel—Charles Brockden Brown’s *Wieland* (1798)—depicts the acousmatic voice as a symptom of “the eruption of the unconscious through an uncanny vocal economy based on ventriloquism” (2010, p. 22). In Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), the publication of which marks the last high point of the Gothic Romance in Britain and Ireland, the infernal wanderer Melmoth berates his victims with his voice until, he hopes, they eventually succumb to him and agree to take his place in a Faustian pact. Given Maturin’s distrust of organized religion, the object voice—and its associated traumatic core—takes precedence in both demonic (Melmoth) and establishment (the Inquisition) means of perverse interrogation. Indeed, the characterization of Melmoth’s vocalicity demonstrates that the voice may come to embody a typically Gothic negative sublime even in early horror literature: that is, a sonic horror that eclipses and threatens the subjectivity—the sense of self—of the persecuted. In a particularly vivid scene in Maturin’s novel, Melmoth takes on the role of a ghostly abbot whose voice horrifies more than even the “softened” and “death-like gloom” of his visage: a “bodyless and spectre head” with “an effect truly appalling” that speaks with such force that “the deep tones of his voice rolled like subterranean thunder round the church” (Maturin 1998, p. 187). Recalling Edmund Burke’s influential understanding of sublimity—that is advanced in his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757)—as being exemplified in the sounds of raging storms and thunder, the narrator here, Monçada, is frozen by the power of Melmoth’s thunderous, sublime voice. This is not a terror that heightens the senses as may be expected, for instance, in the Female Gothic writing of the period.⁸ Horrific sublimity here reinforces the sense of corporeal entrapment that Monçada is subjected to in the vaults of the Inquisition. Thus, this distinctly Male Gothic writing of excess draws from both visual and auditory registers to redouble the effects of infernal persecution.

Most likely writing against that paradigm of the Male Gothic mode, Matthew Gregory Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796), critics agree that Ann Radcliffe, whose novels are representative of the terror school of Gothic, eschews the visual obscenities of horror by locating threat and alterity primarily in the sonic realms of her fifth novel *The Italian* (1797). The rationale for Radcliffe executing this change in register is to reassert the primacy of an aesthetics of (veiled) terror over horror. Yet, the antagonist of *The Italian*, Schedoni, notably lets out a horrific, anguished cry before his death: a “sound so strange and horrible, so convulsed, yet so loud, so exulting, yet so unlike any human voice” that it becomes “demoniacal” and renders, unusually for Radcliffe, a “scene of horror” (1998, p. 402). Thus any binary distinction that may be intuited between the sonic horror of the Male Gothic, on the one hand, and the auditory terrors

of the Female Gothic, on the other, is ultimately placed in question by *The Italian*. In staging Schedoni's long and painful death, Radcliffe patently renders his voice monstrous and invokes rather than challenges an aesthetics of sonic horror. Recent essays in the field have read, respectively, the acoustics of Radcliffe's novels, the Male Gothic mode and even the nineteenth-century horrors of Edgar Allan Poe.⁹ Thus, a historical genealogy of sonic horror is emerging in critical writing that mirrors the development of horror literature itself. In light of this reading of *The Italian*, we may wonder if the binary distinction so often made between those terror and horror schools of the Gothic holds when we consider their renderings of textual sound. Regardless, scholars of modern horror should not overlook the potential influence of the acoustics of the Gothic Romance upon more contemporary iterations of sonic horror.

LITERARY HORROR: INFLUENCE AND NEW DIRECTIONS

The 1973 film version of *The Exorcist*—for which Blatty penned the screenplay—is perhaps the most iconic of all 1970s' horror pictures. In another, *Black Christmas* (1974), we find an unsettling auditory chimera that seems to combine the approaches taken in the novels *Psycho* and *The Exorcist*. In this early slasher film, a serial killer known as “the moaner”—a moniker which draws attention to his oral *modus operandi* for terrifying his prospective victims—berates a series of sorority girls over the telephone. During these calls, horrific, guttural sounds are interspersed with several “thrown” voices that recall Norman's ventriloquizing of his mother in *Psycho*. Like the corporeality of Shelley's creature in *Frankenstein*, this voice seems an impossibly constructed monstrosity as it contains within its spectrum of vocality a series of aspirate moans, primordial grunts and several voices of the clinically deranged. As such, the formal technique that structures the moaner's calls is more aesthetically representative of a splicing—forming a mixtape of depravity—than it is to a monolithic treatment of the voice. Yet, this technologized voice is prefigured in *The Exorcist* and, in turn, literary horror more broadly. As in Pazuzu's possession of Regan, and perhaps even in Schedoni's death cries in *The Italian*, the effects of the monstrous voice exceed the possibility of a purely organic production of these tonalities. That the moaner's identity is neither confirmed nor revealed—we merely gaze upon the victims from the killer's perspective—only highlights further the inconceivable nature of the cause of the monstrous voice in *Black Christmas*. Yet, we may also conclude that the horror produced by the occluded and malign speaker at the end of the telephone line is rooted in the uncanny similarity that the telephonic voice bears to the already established acousmatic or sourceless voice that had scared generations of horror readers. Thus, the telephonic voice does not merely emerge with the invention of the telephone itself.

All of these voices, so far, have a certain hybridity: myriad demands come from those occluded or deranged subjects who (impossibly) seem to be at the root of these disturbing auditory effects. Such sonic horrors tend to generate,

too, a sense of Gothic entrapment, claustrophobia and isolation. We may experience more purely the isolation inherent in the voice by reading a vocality that seems to attempt to exorcize itself. Such an example is found in the solitary and primordial scream voiced by Kurt Cobain in Nirvana's "Scentless Apprentice," which appears on their 1993 album *In Utero*.¹⁰ Nirvana is not a traditionally Goth band, per se, but this track, its lyrics and delivery are all inspired by, and reimagine, one of the great late twentieth-century European Gothic novels: Patrick Süskind's *Perfume* (1985). *Das Parfum* was originally published in German in 1985 and later translated by John E. Woods into English in 1987. The novel forms a long, almost philosophic, meditation upon the power of smell and its invasive and intoxicating qualities. In reading *Perfume*, Susann Cokal argues that smell "is particularly suited to the horror genre" and even suggests that it is "the most primal sense, the one that develops first and stays with us; it can provoke visceral experiences—vomiting, shudders, joy—even more immediately than sight and sound, for example, can do" (2010, p. 180). Through privileging such grotesqueries, Süskind's bleak *künstlerroman* follows the life of Jean-Baptiste Grenouille: a boy born with no scent but with incredible and nuanced olfactory perception. He becomes a perfumer's apprentice, concocting the most beautiful, even sublime, scents by drawing their magic ingredients from embalmed corpses. Suggestive of a Gothic sensorium, Grenouille's olfactory gift is compared to that of the musical prodigy or "wunderkind." Yet this comparison only holds true to an extent, the narrator recounts, as the "individual tones" from which the composer of music may draw is narrower than "the alphabet of odours" that is "incomparably larger and more nuanced" than any musical scale. Süskind's narrator highlights, too, the isolation that is inherent in his antagonist: "the creative activity of Grenouille the wunderkind took place only inside him and could be perceived by no other than himself" (2015, pp. 27–28).

The parallels that may be drawn between Jean-Baptiste, the wunderkind, and Cobain's experience of artistry may be troubling, but they serve to throw into relief the novel's status as a dark exploration of the vicissitudes of mediating raw genius into artistic form. Grenouille must learn his trade—the *form* to which the perfumer works—before he can concoct his sublime scent, his masterpiece. Cobain, he has said, was obsessed by *Perfume* and the aforementioned artistic parallels suggest the possibility of a narcissistic recognition fuelling his infatuation with the book. In an interview in August 1993, he claims to have read *Perfume* about ten times in his life and that it continued to both fascinate and disturb him above any other novel.¹¹ Cobain's obsession with the book could be accounted for in light of its antagonist's non-identity. For all his ability to discern and aestheticize the spectrum of scents that the world has to offer him, Grenouille, the greatest of perfumers, has no scent himself. Through its title, Cobain's homage to *Perfume* draws attention to this debilitating lack. Indeed, it is not just the lyrics of "Scentless Apprentice" that are inspired by Grenouille but also Cobain's delivery of the track's central refrain. Reading simply as "Get away!" Cobain screams this call for isolation repeatedly so that

its symbolic content—the words themselves—is indecipherable on first listening. It is most convincing, I think, to suggest that Cobain here fuses his persona with his understanding of Grenouille's. Indeed, in the 1993 interview with *Much*, Cobain speaks almost sympathetically of Grenouille's misanthropic nature—"I can relate to that," he says—and in his subsequent synopsis of the novel, he foregrounds a section of Süskind's narrative in which Grenouille travels into the wilderness, as Cobain puts it, in order to embark upon a "walk of death" (2014, 1:15–1:16, 0:55). The Cobain of "Scentless Apprentice," then, ventriloquizes Grenouille's disgust so as to convey a more general sense of misanthropy and non-identity. Since the words themselves do not connote horror, the chilling effect of the chorus is produced mostly by the timbre of Cobain's screams. In these throes of agony, Cobain could be read as trying to exorcize himself or, at least, his debilitating feelings of isolation and self-loathing. The horror novel has been reimagined, then, to create an immediate and disturbing sonic experience that foregrounds the alterity of the voice—as well as its isolated character—over the symbolic content that it carries.

Evident in the varied concerns of scholarly work collected for a recent special issue of *Horror Studies* (2016), sonic horrors certainly speak to interdisciplinary examinations. Beyond the music of Nirvana, in recent articles the ululations and howls of wolves have been read as influencing Goth rock, and the horror podcast, too, is placed under scholarly examination.¹² In the years to come, the literary influences upon horror podcasting are likely to receive ever-closer critical attention. Intriguingly, episode three of the first season of *The Black Tapes* (2015) mockumentary podcast, for instance, introduces an important modern horror myth: that of the "unsound", which, if heard, is believed to cause the death of its auditor within a year.¹³ Suggestive of a supernatural origin, the unsound has been found by scientific studies mentioned in the series to be "neither natural nor artificial," and the supposed voice of reason in the tale, Dr Strand, speaks skeptically of its mythic association with the voice of an "archdemon": "The Unsound is his voice," Strand recounts, "gently asking the listener to invite him into his world" (Reagan 2015, season 1, episode 3). The theme of exploring devil's music is also central to the first series of the show when in "Name That Tune" the augmented fourth or *diabolus in musica* becomes an important motif in the ritual invocation of (supposed) demons. Thus, it is not merely that horror podcasts may demonstrate literariness—that is, knowledge of horror literature—in their form and content but that, too, they adopt and adapt narrative standards of horror in a way that reflects upon their own sonic medium. That the portentous a-tonal dim of the "unsound" in *The Black Tapes* may be understood in terms of the voice also suggests that the alterity inherent in vocality will have a lasting influence upon these emerging sonic horrors. The horror of the voice, we have seen, does not begin to emerge with modern sound technologies but is prefigured and premeditated even in the Gothic Romances of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. There is, then, a genealogy of sonic horrors ready to be traced and explored further in future scholarly work on literary horror.

NOTES

1. I draw from many of the most recent of these studies in the chapter that follows. The origins of the current critical interest in Gothic sound studies may be traced back to Isabella van Elferen's influential monograph *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012).
2. In his reading of Hans Holbein the Younger's *The Ambassadors* (1533), Jacques Lacan argues that the skull that reveals itself anamorphically at the front of the painting invites a radical shift in perception so that the percipient becomes gazed upon by the skull itself: there is, then, a moment of objectification of the viewer (Lacan 1979, pp. 85–89).
3. Suggesting this sustained attention to sonic adaptations of horror, Danielewski's sister, the recording artist Poe, also penned or co-wrote a number of accompanying songs to the novel that are collected on her parallax second album *Haunted* (2000). The novel itself is conscious of its engagement with a broad range of burgeoning (the Internet) and established (typewriters, video cameras and CDs) technologies.
4. For an enlightening account of splatterpunk horror literature and its emergence in the 1980s, see Xavier Aldana Reyes's reading of the genre in his monograph *Body Gothic: Corporeal Transgression in Contemporary Literature and Horror Film* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), 28–51.
5. Bloch was a prolific writer of both the fantastic and psychological horror literature. Deeply interested in H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos, in the 1930s and early 1940s, Bloch wrote several stories for the cult magazine *Weird Tales* in a Lovecraftian style. From the mid-1940s onward, his writing became concerned with more human horrors, and his work began increasingly to focus upon stories of criminality.
6. The Slovenian school's theoretical interest in ventriloquism is emphasized further by the cover image of Mladen Dolar's *A Voice and Nothing More*, which uses a promotional image of the ventriloquist and his doll from "The Dummy," a tale that formed the final part of the 1945 horror anthology film *Dead of Night*.
7. See Matt Foley, "Voices of Terror and Horror: Towards an Acoustics of Modern Gothic," in *Sound Effects: The Object Voice*, eds. Jorge Sacido-Romero and Sylvia Mieszkowski (Leiden: Brill-Rodopi, 2015), 217–42.
8. For a reading of the acousmatic object voice in Radcliffe and Maturin, see Matt Foley, "'My voice shall ring in your ears': The acousmatic voice and the timbral sublime in the Gothic romance," *Horror Studies*, 7.2 (2016), 275–91.
9. I am thinking here of three recent journal articles: Joan Passey, "Sound and silence: The aesthetics of the auditory in the novels of Ann Radcliffe," *Horror Studies*, 7.2 (2016), 189–204; Angela M. Archambault, "The Function of Sound in the Gothic Novels of Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis and Charles Maturin," *Etudes Epistémè*, 29 (2016). Available online: <https://episteme.revues.org/965>; Frances Clarke, "Gothic vibrations and Edgar Allan Poe," *Horror Studies*, 7.2 (2016), 307–18.
10. The lyrics of the opening verse to "Scentless Apprentice" read: "Like most babies smell like butter / His smell smelled like no other / He was born scentless and senseless / He was born a scentless apprentice."

11. In a 1993 interview in Seattle with the Canadian *Much* television network, Cobain can clearly be heard to say that Süskind's novel "just affects me. It makes me want to cut my nose off" (*Much* (2014), "Our Last Time w/ Kurt Cobain (1993)," *Youtube*, 0:34–0:38, available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDgP4hN4OA4>. Last accessed: 26.02.2017).
12. I refer here to two articles from the "Sonic Horror" (2016, ed. by Isabella van Elferen) special issue: Amanda DiGioia, "A cry in the dark: The howls of wolves in horror and heavy metal music," *Horror Studies*, 7.2 (2016), 293–306 and Danielle Hancock, "Welcome to *Welcome to Night Vale*: First steps in exploring the horror podcast," *Horror Studies*, 7.2 (2016), 219–34.
13. An unofficial transcript of episode three "The Unsound" is available online: <http://theblacktapestranscripts.weebly.com/episode-103-the-unsound.html>. Last accessed: 26.02.2017.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Blatty, William Peter. 2007. *The Exorcist*. London: Corgi.
- Bloch, Robert. 1959/2013. *Psycho*. London: Robert Hale Ltd.
- Botting, Fred. 2015a. Horrorspace: Reading *House of Leaves*. *Horror Studies* 6 (2): 239–253.
- . 2015b. Poe, Voice, and the Origin of Horror Fiction. In *Sound Effects: The Object Voice in Fiction*, ed. Jorge Sacido-Romero and Sylvia Mieszkowski, 73–100. Leiden: Brill Rodopi.
- Cokal, Susann. 2010. 'Hot with rapture and cold with fear': Grotesque, Sublime, and Postmodern Transformations in Patrick Süskind's *Perfume*. In *The Philosophy of Horror*, ed. Thomas Fahy, 179–198. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky.
- Danielewski, Mark Z. 2000. *House of Leaves*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Dolar, Mladen. 2006. *A Voice and Nothing More*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Edwards, Justin. 2015. Eerie Technologies and Gothic Acoustemology. In *Technologies of the Gothic in Literature and Culture: Technogothics*, ed. Edwards Justin, 48–59. Abingdon: Routledge.
- van Elferen, Isabella. 2016. Sonic Monstrosity. *Horror Studies* 7 (2): 307–318.
- Judson, Barbara. 2010. A Sound of Voices: The Ventriloquial Uncanny in *Wieland* and *Prometheus Unbound*. *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 44 (1): 21–37.
- Lacan, Jacques. 1979. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. London: Penguin Books.
- Maturin, Charles. 1998. *Melmoth the Wanderer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Much*. 2014. Our Last Time w/ Kurt Cobain (1993). *Youtube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDgP4hN4OA4>. Accessed February 26, 2017.
- Punter, David. 1999. Ceremonial Gothic. In *Spectral Readings: Towards a Gothic Geography*, ed. Glennis Byron and David Punter, 37–52. Houndmills: Macmillan.
- Radcliffe, Ann. 1998. *The Italian*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Reagan, Alex. 2015. The Unsound. *The Black Tapes*, 1:3. Pacific Northwest Stories, June 2. <http://theblacktapespodcast.com/blog/2015/6/2/the-black-tapes-podcast-episode-103-the-unsound>. Accessed February 26, 2017.
- Sacido-Romero, Jorge, and Sylvia Mieszkowski. 2015. Revoicing Writing: An Introduction to Theorizing Vocality. In *Sound Effects: The Object Voice*, ed. Jorge Sacido-Romero and Sylvia Mieszkowski, 1–18. Leiden: Brill-Rodopi.
- Süskind, Patrick. 2015. *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer*. Trans. John E. Woods. London: Penguin Books.



Hesitation Marks: The Fantastic and the Satirical in Postmodern Horror

Laura Findlay

Bret Easton Ellis utilizes elements of horror in many of his novels; however, despite the sometimes graphically violent and darkly thrilling aspects of his work, he is more comfortably labeled a satirist, who, in a very postmodern way, blends numerous high and low cultural references in his work—name-dropping pop songs, designer clothes and accessories, sports cars, works of art, as well as television programs and films. In the 1980s, Ellis was regarded as part of the literary Brat Pack, a supposed new wave of young authors who were grouped together due to the tone of their novels, inhabited by indifferent, hedonistic, and privileged characters. More recently, Ellis has turned his attention to writing for the screen, big and small. In his podcast, he plays host to filmmakers, screenwriters, and producers, with the odd rock star or author thrown in for good measure. Ellis's podcasts have become notorious for their lengthy introductions, written and narrated by the author himself, and many of them turn their attention to the state of cinema in a world of downloadable and streamable “content,” as Ellis derisively terms it. Ellis arguably has a great nostalgia for the golden age of Hollywood cinema.¹ This issue of content versus art is one that Ellis continuously returns to, and he discusses this with many of his guests. This nostalgia, although focused on film, merits a mention due to the fact it arguably exhibits a keen awareness of the changing nature of an art form.

This is a concern that extends back to some of Ellis's novels, namely *American Psycho* (1991) and *Lunar Park* (2005). Ellis can be understood to use devices from horror and Gothic fiction to satirize or undermine the antiquated notion

L. Findlay (✉)
University of Dundee, Dundee, UK

of the god-like author and the importance of the novel as a literary art form. Connections between the Gothic and the postmodern in relation to Ellis's work have been made by a number of academics.² Ruth Helyer states that "both discourses are vague and difficult to define, they encourage the use of the imagination, and become associated with [...] incoherence" (Helyer 2000, p. 727). Ellis utilizes conventions of horror and gothic fiction in *American Psycho* and *Lunar Park* to exaggerate this incoherence, using monstrous doubles, the fantastic, and the repressed to promote postmodern ideas about the role of fiction, the author, and the novel. The use of these devices to throw such notions into question and to create chaos, rather than unity and order, can also be interpreted as indicative of an anxiety in the wake of the "end of an era" for the novelist, an end that Ellis comedically describes in the extreme in the opening pages of *Lunar Park* (2005), echoing a similar crisis present in *American Psycho* (1991) for the yuppie protagonist, Patrick Bateman, as he chaotically hurtles toward the end of the 1980s and the Wall Street boom. This chapter will focus on Ellis's use of satire and the fantastic in *American Psycho* and *Lunar Park*, both devices are used to interrogate the figure of the author and status of the novel, by constantly undermining or questioning stability, unity, and reliability by remaining in a state of flux between fantasy and reality.

The nostalgia noted above could be argued to hold a connection to the sense of disempowerment in Ellis's work, noted by Marjorie Worthington:

In *American Psycho*, protagonist Patrick Bateman combats his sense of being an inadequate competitor in the testosterone-charged Wall Street milieu by committing (or fantasizing about committing) a dizzying array of serial-killer type murders [...] *Imperial Bedrooms* connects masculine disempowerment with the image of the impotent and ignored Hollywood screenwriter, but it is Ellis's 2005 novel *Lunar Park* that most fully explores the overlap between the emasculated contemporary man and the disempowered writer. (Worthington 2014, pp. 59–60)

This disempowerment displays an anxiety surrounding a lack of control over one's work or a lack of importance regarding one's status. Ellis has had a long and continued interest in the changing role of the artist, whether it be that of the author, director, or musician, and whether or not this role must adapt to the increasingly connected and fast-paced world that we live in. This subject is one that Ellis explores in quite a dark and at times extreme manner in his novels. The link between Ellis's podcast discussions about film and his novels also seems fitting due to the connections that the author himself makes between different forms of media in his work, such as music, film, and television. These intertextual connections highlight the way in which Ellis promotes the relationship between different levels and forms of representation—a song mentioned in his novel may comment on a particular era, foreshadow something in the text that is yet to come, or act as a darkly funny juxtaposition; similarly, a film mentioned in the text can provide another narrative, another text that seems to comment on the characters, the plot, or the novel itself. These are simple, yet effective

postmodern devices that constantly act to undermine not only the role of the author in Ellis's work but also the concept of truth in narrative. Making real-world references loom large in his novels helps to exaggerate the ludicrousness of extreme events that appear unreal and yet not outside the realm of possibility. For example, Patrick Bateman enjoys the music of Phil Collins—he inhabits a world like our own, where Phil Collins and his music exists; however, by the same logic, do we believe that Bateman eats brains, which he so adamantly confesses to his lawyer toward the end of the text? Such gruesome things also have real-world equivalents (Ed Gein is mentioned by Bateman) and yet this mix of the real and seemingly unreal provokes hesitation. A hesitation between “fact” and fiction, fantasy and reality. This is particularly apt when discussing *American Psycho*, the confusion between these two states bled from the text into Ellis's own experience of the promotion and reception of the novel.

Reasonable explanations for strange and unbelievable occurrences are hinted at within both novels. This results in hesitation between whether one is witnessing a hallucination or an actual supernatural, or otherwise unbelievable, event. Brian McHale, in *Postmodernist Fiction*, describes this as the postmodern fantastic (McHale 1987, p. 74). The postmodern fantastic stems from Tzvetan Todorov's idea of the fantastic, which belongs to two genres: firstly, the uncanny, in which apparently supernatural events are ultimately explained away rationally as hallucinations or deceptions, and secondly, the marvelous, in which the supernatural is treated as the norm (p. 74). A text accurately belongs to the fantastic when it maintains hesitation between these two genres. McHale recognizes that most postmodern texts are no longer hesitant and fully enter the marvelous. Arguably, both *Lunar Park* and *American Psycho* retain such a level of hesitation for them to be properly considered as belonging to the fantastic.

American Psycho, due to its sexually violent scenes written in unaffected prose, marked Ellis as a notoriously dangerous writer, mainly due to the reaction of certain feminist factions, which branded the novel as “a how-to manual [...] in raping and torturing women” (Brannon 1993, p. 240). Simon and Schuster, Ellis's publishers at the time, quickly decided to drop the novel, sparking controversy and debate over issues of sexual violence, pornography, and censorship. Not only did this media frenzy serve to give Ellis cultural notoriety, but it also blurred the boundaries between Ellis's public and private lives. Criticisms of *American Psycho* turned into personal slander when Ellis was called a misogynist, treated by some as though he had committed the terrible accounts he described in his novel.³

The novel was grossly misread by many critics; Terry Teachout of the *National Review* published an article in 1991 that analyzed the character of Patrick Bateman against the traditional mold of the morally aware protagonist and Ellis against the mold of the author whose duty it was to instill a moral core in the novel: “there is no moment in *American Psycho* where Bret Easton Ellis, who claims to be a serious artist, exhibits the workings of an adult moral imagination. It is as if he knows nothing of good and evil” (Teachout 1990). Many critics revealed a desire for a

realist mode of writing; a mirror up to nature. The *New York Times* printed articles the year *American Psycho* was published, both defending and attacking the novel. One of the more well-known articles was by Roger Rosenblatt, entitled “Snuff this Book! Will Bret Easton Ellis Get Away With Murder?” From the title alone, it is evident that Ellis was being dealt with as a Patrick Bateman figure, cold-hearted, misogynist, and deadly. In an interview with Roger Cohen for the *New York Times*, Ellis retorted, “Bateman is a misogynist [...] But I would think most Americans learn in junior high to differentiate between the writer and the character he is writing about. People seem to insist I’m a monster. But Bateman is the monster. I am not on the side of that creep” (Cohen 1991). Due to the parallels made between Ellis’s celebrity lifestyle and the high-power, money-driven world of Patrick Bateman, the consensus was that the author did not deplore the traits of his protagonist but rather shared many of them. The impersonal tone of the novel did nothing to prevent such impressions.

American Psycho can be understood as a text that transformed Ellis’s identity, changing the way the public viewed him. Past interviews attest to the fact that Ellis is highly aware of his public persona: “To some degree your identity as a writer is dependent on press—if people aren’t writing about the book, or are writing about it negatively or positively, I guess that can be influential to readers” (Collingridge 2005). Ellis, aware of this blur between his public and private selves, and even that of himself and his fictional characters, made this the subject matter of his novel, *Lunar Park*, a pseudo-autobiographical novel that references Stephen King’s *The Shining* (1977) and William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (1603), among many of the author’s own novels. In this novel, Ellis fictionalizes himself as the main character and uses many real places, people, and events from his past alongside fictional characters both new and old. He opens the novel by charting his rise to fame and his rampant drug use, resulting in many incidences of public embarrassment. After his father’s death, Ellis finds himself married to a film actress, Jayne Dennis, who he had numerous affairs with in the past, resulting in the birth of his son. After 9/11, he retreats with Jayne and young Robby (who shares his name with Ellis’s deceased father) to the suburbs, as they no longer feel safe living in the city. Feeling far away from urban life and tied down by marriage and fatherhood, Ellis as narrator and protagonist opens the novel in an attempt to assert control and foreground his position as, pre-empting the character’s insecurity, he says,

“You do an awfully good impression of yourself.”

This is the first line of *Lunar Park* and in its brevity and simplicity it was supposed to be a return to form, an echo, of the opening line from my debut novel, *Less Than Zero*.

“People are afraid to merge on freeways in Los Angeles.” (Ellis 2005, p. 3)

Lunar Park sits uneasily between a “factual” memoir and a fictional account. By playing with the idea of genre, Ellis prompts questions of authorship and truth. Who is speaking to us in the text? Is it Bret Easton Ellis from the “real” world, or is it a fictional Ellis who should be considered in an entirely different manner?

Ellis has been in and out of the media's focus since the publication and surprise success of his first novel, *Less Than Zero* (1985), published while he was still at college aged only twenty-one. He found overnight wealth and was thrust into the world of celebrity, guaranteeing media interest in not only his work but also his personal life. He charts his rise to fame and his subsequent decadent behavior in the opening pages of *Lunar Park*; however, what he portrays is so ridiculous and extreme that it is read as satire. While on an extended book tour to promote *Glamorama* (1998), Ellis as protagonist describes how a "‘drug cop’ was hired [...] to make sure I basically didn't snort heroin before the readings" (Ellis 2005, p. 21). A copy of the memos the drug cop sent to Knopf's publicity department follows, increasingly ludicrous in their reports of the author's drug-induced behavior:

E-mail memo #6: "15 miles southwest of Detroit writer was found hiding in back of stalled van in the median of a divided highway, picking at non-existent scabs."
[...]

E-mail memo #27: "Santa Fe; writer allegedly encouraged a Doberman pinscher to perform cunnilingus on unconscious groupie and when said animal failed to show interest in said groupie writer punched said animal in head and was severely bitten."

E-mail memo #34: "Miami Book Fair; writer locked himself in bookstore bathroom repeatedly yelling at concerned employees to 'Go away!' When writer emerged an hour later he started to 'freak out' again. 'I have a snake on me!' writer screamed. 'It's biting me! It's IN MY MOUTH!' Writer was dragged to a waiting squad car." (Ellis 2005, p. 22)

In this extract, repeated mention of Ellis as "the writer" serves to highlight his authorial role, but it also undermines it by not naming him directly. Before any supposedly supernatural occurrences are reported in the novel, these early pages of the book set a precedent for Ellis as a drug-taking, unreliable narrator. These extracts are only believed because they are noted by a third party. The hallucinations mentioned here foreshadow the supposedly supernatural goings on later in the novel. By naming himself as protagonist, Ellis appears to blend fact and fiction, also ensuring that he is a constant presence within the novel. Ellis uses satire in a manner that almost anticipates the fantastic, helping to establish hesitation and set up his narrator as chaotic and unreliable before any supernatural events occur.

Satire is also used in a similar manner in *American Psycho*, Bateman's bouts of insanity and violence increase, as does his drug taking, calling into question whether the scenes that he describes have occurred or only exist as drug-induced hallucinations. In one scene, Bateman attempts to eat the remains of one of his victims:

I grind bone and fat and flesh into patties, and though it does sporadically penetrate how unacceptable some of what I'm doing actually is, I just remind myself that this thing, this meat, is nothing [...] and along with a Xanax (which I am

now taking half-hourly) this thought momentarily calms me and then I'm humming, humming the theme to a show I watched often as a child. (Ellis 1991, p. 332)

This scene has a hint of the ridiculous about it but the hesitation to completely dismiss it remains as we are reminded of real-life examples of such barbarity (Bateman talks of Ted Bundy and Ed Gein to his co-workers). Although Bateman is a character that relates extreme violence to the reader, we are never sure if this violence has taken place. However, Bateman's possible delirium, which may have been brought on by his abuse of both prescription and illegal drugs, is never founded on anything other than supposition. By attempting to grasp the truth behind such scenes, the reader brings sanity to the text and in a sense attempts to force upon the text a sense of reality by trying to decipher which elements are "fact" and which are fiction (Bateman's potential delusions).

There exists a postmodern paradox between a writer who foregrounds his existence in the "real" world as a "real" subject and one who represents his life as a fiction, which he can re-write in order to regain control of it, locating himself as a fictional subject who both controls and is controlled by the written word, who constructs, yet is constructed. In *Lunar Park*, Ellis attempts to convey himself as both an abstract author-function and a real-life historical author (Stillinger 1991, p. 3). This hesitation between one state and another arguably mirrors that of the fantastic.

Lunar Park is neither a straightforward autobiography nor a straightforward supernatural thriller; in the initial planning stages of the novel, Ellis set out to write a genre novel (a supernatural horror as a homage to Stephen King), after having some difficulty progressing with the piece he decided to "put himself in the novel" (Aftab 2005). Ellis has said of *Lunar Park*, "Sure, it was a ghost story [...] I enjoyed playing with the traditional trappings of the genre, but [...] the process of writing began to matter to me as material" (Collingridge 2005). *Lunar Park* can be read as a novel that paradoxically upholds the constructs it seeks to undermine. This blend of fact and fiction and the deliberate confusion between author and protagonist is directly related to Ellis's experiences after publishing *American Psycho*. Evidently, this is no coincidence, as Bateman appears to haunt the Ellis of *Lunar Park*. The connection between these two novels becomes apparent when Ellis admits that *American Psycho* was a very personal novel to him: "[Bateman is] really infused with my own pain and what I was going through as a guy in his 20s, trying to fit into a society that he doesn't necessarily want to fit into but doesn't really know what the other options are. That was Patrick Bateman to me. It was trying to become a kind of ideal man because that seemed to be the only kind of a guy that was 'accepted'" (Grow 2016). Due to the controversy surrounding the novel during its release, Ellis denied any personal connection to the character of Bateman until much later (Grow 2016). The repression of this personal connection to his protagonist is clearly linked to Bateman resurfacing in *Lunar*

Park. The confusion present here between Ellis's personal and public life, between fantasy and reality, and the hesitation between these states means that both novels maintain a state of flux throughout that undermines notions of truth, reliability, stability, and unity. It follows that such unreliability does not sit well with the notion of a god-like author.

In the pages of *Lunar Park*, the fictional Ellis relives the experiences he had during the publication of *American Psycho*. He describes how a twofold nature to his public persona emerged: "I was taken seriously. I was a joke. I was avant-garde. I was traditionalist. I was underrated. I was overrated. I was innocent" (Ellis 2005, p. 12). Here, Ellis is signaling *American Psycho* as his moment of self-awareness, the realization that he had more than one identity; he was not one unified self. The idea of Bateman as Ellis's monstrous double is foregrounded in *Lunar Park*, when he describes himself as playing quite a passive role in writing *American Psycho*:

What I didn't—and couldn't—tell anyone was that writing the book had been an extremely disturbing experience [...] Someone—*something*—else took over [...] The book was written mostly at night when the spirit of this madman would visit, sometimes waking me from a deep, Xanax-induced sleep. When I realized, to my horror, what this character wanted from me, I kept resisting, but the novel forced itself to be written. I would often black out for hours at a time only to realize that another ten pages had been scrawled out. (Ellis 2005, p. 13)

Although Ellis portrays himself here as a passive figure in the creation of *American Psycho*, he also paradoxically depicts himself as a Romantic-like figure, an artist who suffers for his work. It is this paradox of Ellis as a passive, controlled character, and a dominant author and creator, that exists in both *Lunar Park* and *American Psycho*. This is evident later in *Lunar Park* when Ellis states, "I would fearfully watch my hand as the pen swept across the yellow legal pads I did the first draft on. I was repulsed by this creation and wanted to take no credit for it" (2005, p. 13). Ellis, as author and protagonist, alludes to the idea that Romantic authors, such as Mary Shelley, dealt with; Ellis, as narrator and protagonist in *Lunar Park*, characterizes himself as an author who has created something that has taken on a life of its own and dominates the text, but in essence the author remains the god-like creator.

During the Romantic period, issues of power and the self were dealt with by a number of prominent authors, such as Lord Byron, Mary Shelley, and William Wordsworth. British Romanticism influenced the American Transcendentalists, such as Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne, and writers of Gothic tales, such as Edgar Allan Poe. An element of self-reflexivity, and the psychological, entered into the way that texts were written and were intended to reflect the author's and the protagonist's personal turmoil at the changing world (Hutcheon 1993, p. 11). Supernatural images, or apocalyptic visions of renewal used by these authors, can be understood to influence postmodern ideas of deconstruction, new world order, and crisis. The idea

that you could change or control your life through the power of the imagination is present in both *American Psycho* and *Lunar Park*. Such notions reflect the dominant masculine ideals of reason and truth; however, unlike the use of the supernatural and the fantastic in Romanticism and the Gothic, which advanced the power of the self and of the mind, postmodern works use these ideas to undermine reason and truth. This is partly due to the fact that the self in postmodern works is not unified, and the author does not present himself, unproblematically, as the governing force of the work. Linda Hutcheon says of the paradoxical role of the postmodern author that he both imposes “a single determinate meaning” upon the text, through self-reflexivity, and, at the same time, works to subvert all attempts at attaining such closure (Hutcheon 1984, p. 8). In the same manner, closure cannot be attained with regard to the protagonists in Ellis’s novels. There are no reliable or unified entities inside or “outside” of the text.

Maria Beville makes the claim that “if any contemporary novel was to define the genre Gothic-postmodernism as it manifests itself today, none could do so more succinctly than Bret Easton Ellis’ *Lunar Park*” (Beville 2009, p. 171). Beville notes that the “unconscious force of writing” Ellis describes in *Lunar Park* is present in other Gothic-postmodern texts, mentioning Mikhail Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita* (1967), Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* (1988), as well as Paul Auster’s *City of Glass* (1985) (Beville 2009, p. 172). Like Auster, Ellis simultaneously undermines and upholds his position as author by placing himself in the text and taking this tactic one step further by having his fictional creations come to life within the pages of *Lunar Park*—due to this, Beville notes that the novel “takes on a life of its own beyond the control of its professed author” (Beville 2009, p. 175). Beville goes on to argue that “as a result, the traditional Gothic plot, based on finding reasonable solutions for supernatural occurrences, proves impossible in this text, as nothing is real or trustworthy due to the unreliability of the narrative” (Beville, p. 175).

American Psycho can be understood as an example of the postmodern fantastic, as the reliability of the events described can be disputed, and hesitation is maintained throughout the novel. Admittedly, there exists no supernatural element to the text, therefore, it cannot be understood as strictly belonging to the fantastic in the traditional sense; however, there is never any conclusion as to whether Bateman is in fact a serial killer or is merely a Wall Street yuppie that fantasizes about the violence he narrates. The hesitation in the novel is dealt with in a similar manner to the fantastic. The banality of Bateman’s narrative is not characteristic of the fantastic. Such texts are usually fraught with terror, threat, and suspense, but McHale points out that this is not a logical or structural necessity, it is merely a tone that is not typically seen in such texts (McHale, p. 75). Despite this seemingly composed tone, there are many occasions when Bateman throws the validity of his narration into doubt. He repeats throughout his narrative that his life is “like some movie I once saw,” and his obsession with horror and pornographic films is reflected in his descriptions of scenes of sex and violence (Ellis 1991, p. 332).

When Bateman hires a prostitute to have sex with one of his female friends, he tells us, "Christie sits up and turns herself around [...] while still on top of Elizabeth [...] and soon, like in a movie, like animals, the two of them start feverishly licking and fingering each other" (Ellis 1991, p. 268). Earlier in the novel, he confesses to the reader, "Last night I had dreams that were lit like pornography and in them I fucked girls made of cardboard" (p. 192). Remarks such as these serve to undermine the reality of the sex scenes he describes; we are aware of Bateman's obsession with film and television, he tells people that he is a model or an actor and imagines himself advertising different products. On a number of occasions, he states that he cannot remember certain details of the night before and asks himself, "am I dreaming this?" (p. 252). By the end of the novel, there is a sense that Bateman is definitely insane. Throughout the novel, he repeatedly mentions *The Patty Winters Show*, a talk show assumedly in a similar vein to Oprah Winfrey or Geraldo, the topic of discussion on this show is given to the reader on a regular basis but becomes more and more surreal, ranging from an interview with Donald Trump to an hour-long interview with a breakfast cereal. It is details such as these that Bateman casually drops into the narrative, as though they are nothing out of the ordinary, that cast serious doubt on his story. By the end of the novel, Bateman confesses to his lawyer the numerous murders he has supposedly committed. Bateman states, "I-killed-Paul-Owen-and-I-liked-it" (p. 373). His lawyer replies, "But that's simply not possible [...] Because ... I had ... dinner ... with Paul Owen ... twice ... in London ... just ten days ago" (p. 373). The use of ellipsis heightens the hesitation between fantasy and reality and signals that Bateman's narrative may not be all that it seems, that there are gaps in the "truth" of his version of events. Bateman's world of sex and violence appears to be pure illusion. The hesitation seems to have departed until it is discovered that Bateman's lawyer has confused his identity, and, therefore, may have confused someone else for Paul Owen. The novel ends without any firm resolution, staying within the realm of the fantastic, without the supernatural element. McHale argues that the postmodern fantastic can be understood as a zone of hesitation, not only between the uncanny and the marvelous but also between two worlds where ideas of fantasy and reality and forms of representation are interrogated (McHale 1987, p. 75). Although *American Psycho* does not use the fantastic in the traditional sense, McHale sees the postmodern fantastic as shifting from its original usage: "The fantastic no longer seems to be the exclusive property of texts which are identifiably fantastic in their ontological structure; a generalized fantastic effect or 'charge' seems to be diffused throughout postmodernist writing, making its presence felt in displaced forms in texts that are not formally fantastic at all" (p. 81). Therefore, the fantastic is used in *American Psycho* in order to exaggerate the hesitation between fantasy and reality. The more traditional use of the fantastic can be understood to come into play in *Lunar Park* with the inclusion of seemingly supernatural events. Ellis opens the text by sewing the same seeds of doubt regarding validity by using satire and the fantastic.

As in *American Psycho*, the drug use of the narrator also features prominently in *Lunar Park*, adding to the confusion and uncertainty of the narrative and offering a potential explanation for strange events. Ellis, as narrator, maintains that the events he describes are real. Initially, he doubts what he is experiencing, but, as the novel progresses, he becomes more certain about the “unexplained events” that he has supposedly witnessed (Ellis 2005, p. 256). However, hesitation does not have to be upon the part of the fictional character. McHale states that the reader can fulfill this role (McHale 1987, p. 74). As with *American Psycho*, the reader plays an important part in defining the state of these texts; hesitation, or the inability to judge whether the narrator is telling the truth, determines that the text remains in the realm of the fantastic. Ellis takes this hesitation one step further by creating a pseudo-autobiographical text: “I don’t want to demystify the events that take place and I don’t want to have to clarify which things are autobiographical and which things are less so [...] it’s up to each reader to decide how much of *Lunar Park* actually occurred” (Collingridge 2005). There exists a parallel between the fictional Ellis and the reader, who must attempt to determine how much is “fact” and how much is fiction in terms of Ellis’s “real” life and also fathom how much of what is described in the novel was actually experienced by the fictional Ellis—in other words, did the supernatural events take place?

Ellis as narrator is haunted by figures from his past, both real and fictional. Again, it is never understood whether what is related to the reader happened or was merely a hallucination. He outlines this in the first chapter:

There are [...] people who dispute the horror of the events that took place that autumn on Elsinore Lane, [...] And the few “witnesses” who could corroborate these events have disappeared [...] My psychiatrist at the time, Dr. Janet Kim, offered the suggestion that I was “not myself” during this period, and has hinted that “perhaps” drugs and alcohol were “key factors” in what was a “delusional state. (Ellis 2005, p. 29)

Before the reader has even been told the nature of the “events” that took place, they are called into question. Immediately, Ellis establishes his position as an unreliable narrator, despite being quite adamant that “every word [of his story] is true” (2005, p. 29). Yet, later in the text, Ellis states, “I found myself in Patrick Bateman’s shoes: I felt like an unreliable narrator” (Ellis 2005, p. 123). Comparisons between Bateman and Ellis not only signal issues of identity and authorship but also signal that the chaotic world of *American Psycho* has entered that of *Lunar Park*. The textual fragments of Ellis’s past (*American Psycho*) act, intertextually, to transform and disrupt his present (*Lunar Park*).

Earlier scenes in the novel are described by the narrator with hesitation. At this point, Ellis is unsure of the nature of the strange happenings. He describes a scene where he suspects a Terby doll he has bought for his daughter of either malfunctioning or coming to life:

[The Terby] was sitting innocently by the door. I had not remembered seeing it when I had first entered the room and it just sat there, waiting [...] Stepping forward, I neared it cautiously, as if it were alive, when suddenly it moved. It started wobbling on its claws toward me.

I gasped and backed away [...]

I realized someone had just left the thing on [...] I sighed. I needed to take a Xanax [...] I was flooded with relief and continued laughing at myself—at how the combination of the coke and the doll had struck something awful in me [...] I flipped the small switch beneath the light and turned the Terby off [...] As I turned away [...] something sang out in a clear, high-pitched voice that turned into a guttural squawking [...] I didn't look back as I raced down the hallway. (Ellis 2005, p. 51)

Here the fantastic is used in its traditional form, shifting back and forth from the real to the supernatural with the protagonist doubting the nature of events. However, as the novel progresses, doubt and hesitation only exist for the reader. As Ellis no longer offers rational explanations for these events, the reader must search for them. This shift in the protagonist's belief happens when Ellis hires a paranormal investigator, Robert Miller, to try and explain why his fictional characters are coming to life. He explains to Miller that he believes that someone is impersonating Patrick Bateman, but, as the initial meeting unfolds, it becomes clear that, because Miller is willing to believe his account, Ellis does, too. The supernatural is now treated as ordinary by Miller and his crew, who tell Ellis of previous cases they have dealt with, but there are indications that this supernatural world should be questioned. As Ellis re-enters his home with the investigators, he states, "As usual I pretended it was a dream. This made things easier" (2005, p. 265). The supernatural element to the text does not undermine the autobiographical account that we are given because of the satirical tone that Ellis maintains throughout—the haunting described in the novel becomes as ludicrous as the accounts of the author's personal life that open the novel.

Beville discusses the manner in which the postmodern Gothic parodies Gothic tropes, "Gothic-postmodernism in the novel surfaces from a repetition of old Gothic themes and narrative styles transposed onto the postmodernist paradigm" (Beville 2009, p. 196). Ellis can be understood to blend the satirical tone that he uses throughout the novel—mocking suburban family life, materialism, capitalism, and the modern-day cultural terrors that permeate the narrative—with the hesitation characteristic of the fantastic. This is apparent when the Terby doll returns to terrorize the narrator. Ellis's son, Robby, wakes him up as he fears something is in the house. As he turns on his father's bedroom lamp, he sees an odd shape perched on his father's chest:

"Dad there's something on you."
I opened my eyes but couldn't focus.
What I saw happened very quickly.

The Terby was on my chest, looming above me, its face seizing, its open mouth a rictus that now took up half the doll's head, and the fangs I had only noticed earlier that day were stained brown [...] Its talons were locked into the robe I'd passed out in and its wings were fanning themselves and it wasn't the length of the wingspan that shocked me at that moment (it had grown—I accepted that within a second) but it was the wings webbed with black veins bulging tightly beneath the doll's skin (*the doll's skin, yes, tell this to a sane person and see their reaction*) and pulsing with blood that amazed me. (Ellis 2005, p. 234)

Ellis mentions just before this that he felt like he had been dreaming, having passed out after drinking half a bottle of vodka. Again, the fact that the narrator is under the influence colors one's perception of what follows, ensuring a level of disbelief and uncertainty throughout any supernatural or startling event. This scene, like many other terrifying or horrific scenes in *Lunar Park*, is ridiculous in the extreme and clearly influenced by comically dark horror films of the 1980s, such as *Child's Play* (1988) and *Fright Night* (1985), as well as family films with a touch of terror, specifically, *Gremlins* (1984). The pastiche of such horror films and the blend of other high and low cultural references mentioned earlier (characteristic of postmodern novels) has meant that some critics have accused Ellis of missing the mark when it comes to writing a meaningful or believable horror novel. Steve Almond's review for *The Boston Globe* calls *Lunar Park*

a tangle of horror-movie clichés: the ghost of Ellis senior, boys gone missing, the possessed doll cited above, even a lame recycling of the smirking serial killer Patrick Bateman, last seen in the 1991 Ellis gorefest *American Psycho*. Ellis (the narrator and the author) is too busy scripting slasher scenes to bother with the sort of quiet, human moments that might allow the reader to view his characters as people. (Almond 2005)

Almond goes on to say that the characters in the novel are “cartoons. And it doesn't matter how many times you stab a cartoon—the reader isn't going to experience the danger as real” (Almond 2005). But, does Ellis intend for us to experience the “danger as real”? What is really horrifying about the worlds that he creates in *Lunar Park* or *American Psycho*?

Ellis is not trying to create a traditional horror novel. *Lunar Park*, like *American Psycho*, simultaneously holds its protagonist at a distance and yet delves deeply into their inner-most fears and unspoken thoughts, represented in the chaotic horror that unfolds around them, a chaos that remains in flux between fantasy and reality. Containing multiple references to 1980s horror film and literature, as well as classic Gothic fiction, *Lunar Park* engages in a nostalgia that seeks stability, unity, and reliability, but none can be found. *Lunar Park* and its connection to Ellis as a “real-life” author, as well as a fictional writer, to his oeuvre, and to the numerous “real-life” references made throughout, all act as a postmodern paradox; Ellis is an author who constructs but is also constructed. The appropriation of the fantastic paired

with a satirical tone means that, by the end of the novel, it is not certain if anything can be taken seriously. Parody, pastiche, satire, and the fantastic all act to exaggerate the chaos of the postmodern text—to deconstruct the self, the world presented in the text, the author, and the text itself until one exists in a state of complete hesitation, of not knowing. Well, what could be more horrifying than that?

NOTES

1. For Ellis, this spans from New Hollywood to the 1970s, rather than the 1930s–1950s.
2. As well as Worthington, Helyer, and Beville's work, already quoted above, see also Esther Peeren (2012, pp. 305–21) and Watkiss (2010, pp. 241–52).
3. One example of an extreme reaction to *American Psycho* is Tara Baxter and Nikki Craft's essay, "There are better ways of taking care of Bret Easton Ellis than just censoring him..." in *Making Violence Sexy*, in which Baxter advocates physical violence toward men who promote misogyny and violence against women.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aftab, Kalem. 2005. Collective: Bret Easton Ellis Interview. *BBC*. http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaselector/check/collective/bret_psycho?size=16x9&bgc=8A9EC3&nbram=|&bbram=1. Accessed March 27, 2017.
- Almond, Steve. 2005. Ellis Masquerades as Ellis, and It is Not a Pretty Sight. *The Boston Globe*, August 14. http://archive.boston.com/ae/books/articles/2005/08/14/Ellis_masquerades_as_Ellis_anditisnotaprettysight/. Accessed February 5, 2015.
- Beville, Maria. 2009. *Gothic Postmodernism: Voicing the Terrors of Post-modernity*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Brannon, Robert. 1993. Torturing Women as Fine Art: Why Some Women and Men are Boycotting Knopf. In *Making Violence Sexy: Feminist Views on Pornography*, ed. Diana E.H. Russell, 239–244. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Cohen, Roger. 1991. Bret Easton Ellis Answers Critics of American Psycho. *New York Times*, March 6. http://web.lexisnexis.com/executive/document?_m=33d6fede38fb1ddd2daaf6de5d1a98ae&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtb-zSkSl8_md5=e135e263391. Accessed February 5, 2017.
- Collingridge, Peter. 2005. Q&A with Bret Easton Ellis. *Lunarpark.com*. <http://www.lunarpark.com/interview2.html>. Accessed March 27, 2017.
- Ellis, Bret Easton. 1991. *American Psycho*. London: Picador.
- . 2005. *Lunar Park*. London: Picador.
- Grow, Kory. 2016. *American Psycho* at 25: Bret Easton Ellis on Patrick Bateman's Legacy. *Rolling Stone*, March 31. <https://www.rollingstone.com/movies/movie-news/american-psycho-at-25-bret-easton-ellis-on-patrick-batemans-legacy-175227/>. Accessed January 10, 2018.
- Helyer, Ruth. 2000. Parodied to Death: The Postmodern Gothic of *American Psycho*. *Modern Fiction Studies* 46 (3): 725–746.
- Hutcheon, Linda. 1984. *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*. London: Methuen.

- . 1993. *The Politics of Postmodernism*. London: Routledge.
- McHale, Brian. 1987. *Postmodernist Fiction*. London: Routledge.
- Peeren, Esther. 2012. Ghostly Generation Games: Multidirectional Hauntings and Self-Spectralization in Bret Easton Ellis's *Lunar Park*. *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 53 (4): 305–321.
- Stillinger, Jack. 1991. *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Teachout, Terry. 1990. *American Psycho* Book Review. *National Review*. <http://www.highbeam.com/library>. Accessed March 27, 2017.
- Watkiss, Joanne. 2010. The Horror of Inheritance: Poisonous Lineage in Bret Easton Ellis' *Lunar Park*. *Horror Studies* 1 (2): 241–252.
- Worthington, Marjorie. 2014. Ghosts of Our Fathers: Spectral Authorship and Authenticity in Ellis's *Lunar Park*. *Papers on Language and Literature* 50 (1): 59–89.



“It’s Alive!” New Materialism and Literary Horror

Susan Yi Sencindiver

Intimate engagements with matter in its mode of otherness, abhuman bodies, animate objects, and sentient environments have long been staple features of literary horror. Such aberrant matter has habitually invited readings that heed to the crises of an exhaustive descriptive language, in which limit corporeal phenomena resist easy translation into sociocultural meaning. For Judith Halberstam, the Gothic, comparatively, is characterized by “the inability to narrate and the inability to categorize,” especially when considering the monster as a “meaning machine,” whose body is “remarkably mobile, permeable, and infinitely interpretable” (1995, pp. 21–23). The language seeking to portray the monstrous body frets in its paucity of certainty in the face of surplus signification, bloated by, as Halberstam contends, this body’s propensity to coalesce into one bodily frame the fears pertaining to a myriad of sociocultural differences, such as class, race, gender, and sexuality. Correspondingly, as Judith Butler maintains, there can be no “recourse to a body that has not always already been interpreted by cultural meanings” (2006, p. 12). However, while the monstrous body’s swollen semantic silhouette is undoubtedly contoured by cultural forces, literary horror and its liminal bodies are also more than just discursive products. Although the experience of horror is never unmediated, this experience, conversely, is never free of a materialist surplus. Shifting the conventional interpretive focus from how fearful matter in horror fiction is passively shaped, irreversibly overwritten, and colored by a discursive optic, this study draws on the analytical purchase of new materialist thought to

S. Y. Sencindiver (✉)
Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark

rethink the matter in and of horror, enlisting nineteenth-century literary horror as especially interesting in relation to new materialism on account of their shared exploration of material life. As voiced by Arthur Machen's character, Miss Lally, in *The Three Imposters*, "matter is as really awful and unknown as spirit" (1895, p. 90).

The revival of materialist ontologies in recent years has been animated by a productive interrogation of the linguistic turn and the limitations that arise by prioritizing language, culture, and representation, which have come at the expense of exploring material and somatic realities beyond their ideological articulations and discursive formations. Considering the suspect role of biological essentialism within a historical political perspective, the wariness toward considerations of an extra-textual reality in what Diana Coole and Samantha Frost have termed the constructionist "allergy to 'the real'" is well founded (2010, p. 6). Indeed, the eyes of ideological vigilance—peeled for the exclusions, policing forces, and normalizing claims legitimized in the name of biological constitution—have been and continue to be urgently instrumental in unearthing and denaturalizing power relations. However, this disinclination to consider materiality and the body as anything but a site fixed by surface inscriptions has compromised inquiry by circumscribing this inquiry to a self-contained sociocultural sphere, whereby an anthropocentric purview and a nature-culture binary that constructivists sought to deconstruct are inadvertently reinstated. The problem, moreover, of figuring the matter of bodies in terms of a biological bedrock, empty vessel, or blank page awaiting or solely produced by cultural content, as Elizabeth Grosz (1994) points out, is that this figuring conceptually treats the body as a natural given external to or eclipsed by cultural inscription, as too pliable, and as homogenized into an infinitely plastic self-identical mass. The inscription metaphor, thus, fails to take into account that cultural signs, when inscribed on different material bodies, do "not always or even usually mean the same thing or result in the same text," or the ways in which the specificities of anatomy, living flesh, and physiological processes may differentially impact these inscription processes (Grosz 1994, pp. 156, 190). In Karen Barad's idiom: matter "kicks back" (1998, p. 116). Insofar as material and somatic facticities are not passively formed and solely determined by cultural meanings, but actively interfere with them, attending to the overlooked, yet consequential, factor of material agency in analyses of power may indeed deepen, dilate, and refine ideological critique. Accordingly, new materialism is concerned with the underexplored question of how, as Barad asserts, "matter comes to matter" (2003, p. 801). Yet, its renewed substantial engagement with the dynamics of materialization does not neglect the role of discursive practices. On the contrary, it endeavors to account for the entwined states and mutual conditioning of nature and culture, which leave neither materiality nor ideality intact.

Correspondingly, new materialist art criticism favors modes of critical practice that do not simply herald a move away from a concern with symbolic content, but they seek to expand the intellectual scope of inquiry in their exploratory

effort to theorize agential matter in relation to the material processes, expressions, and behaviors of art objects and labor as well as our sensate, embodied, and presence-based engagement with them. To redress what he views as the hermeneutic regime governing the humanities that detracts from the potential intensity of aesthetic encounters, Hans Gumbrecht (2004), for example, summons approaches in which we pursue not only the meanings of an art work but how it affects, touches, and moves us. Similarly, Sten Pultz Moslund argues that attending to the "aesthetic" aspects of literary language, that is, "to that which is produced by *bodily feeling* or sensory experience," enables an exploration of "spaces in literature as produced by the body: by sensory experiences of reality such as smell, taste, touch, kinetics, sight, and sound" (2015, p. 10). With respect to the "aesthetic" features of horror fiction, discomfiting sensorial experiences are salient. As Xavier Aldana Reyes contends, the genre of horror is named after its intended affect; and its aim "to scare, disturb, or disgust—has often been neglected," which "is detrimental to areas such as horror film or horror fiction, which commonly rely on corporeality or non-cognitive (somatic) or instinctive reactions" (Aldana Reyes 2016, p. 91; 2015, p. 12). Consequently, while I concur with the claim that horror is a "meaning machine," it is also, as Aldana Reyes affirms, an "affect machine" (2016, p. 12). Although language serves as the principal vehicle of horror narratives, it is also never entirely insulated from the material contingencies and processes that it is engendered by and engenders. In contrast to the prominent understanding of words as immaterial and the sign as solely socioculturally determined, Mikel Dufrenne maintains that, although the felt immediacy the word is capable of evoking is not comparable to the sensuous qualities of things, words can nevertheless summon an affective presence (1973, p. 137). Reconceiving literary language as presentation rather than representation, "we move from the supra-sensory code of words as standing for something else (like symbols) to words calling forth the presence of things, or, to be precise, the presence of our *sensations* of things" (Moslund 2015, p. 60). For Aldana Reyes, "all Horror is body Horror" (2016, p. 13). It follows that the language of horror primarily invokes the presence of our sensations of the body by way of the horrors endangering the body and the horrors *of* the body. Such body horror, in turn, often involves, as Aldana Reyes argues, "a direct corporeal rapport between text and viewer" (2016, p. 15). Yet, even when the narrated events feature epistemic horror, in which the source of apprehension is undefined¹ or lacks the explicit display pertaining to the horrors of or harming the body, the sensory impact on a reader may, nevertheless, be animated vicariously through the description of a character's somatic responses and the sensuous qualities of their experience. This is what renders horror fiction such a unique medium: by way of immersive reading, we not only witness a world through the eyes of another, but we also sensuously experience their fearful realities with a keen liveliness and palpable presence. Yet, this attention to embodied responses does not entail a simple mechanical registration of sensory stimuli, nor does it, as Aldana Reyes warns, "assume a universal viewer who will respond according to a monolithic pattern

of human behavior” (2015, p. 16). The “*intensity and expressivity*” of an individual’s reactions, as Julian Hanich stresses, “depends on a number of variables, among them differences in physiological disposition, gender, age, culture etc.” (2009, p. 284). Likewise, while our sensuous experiences are not determinable by culture alone, neither are sensory practices immune from societal influence. For Moslund (2015), Hans J. Rindisbacher (1992), and Jim Drobnick (2006), the senses are permeated by their cultural contexts, social systems, and conceptual ideas, which coalesce in our experience of reality. In our sensuous relations with the world, Moslund writes, we “sort stimuli according to the values or ideologies that govern our perception of reality ... We see and hear and smell what we *think* we see and hear and smell,” whereby sensation and perception coexist (2015, p. 31).

Within literary studies, new materialist-inspired critics have attended not only to the presence effects and material dynamics *of* the literary artifact but also *within* fiction. Kevin Trumpeter (2015), Rochelle L. Johnson (2014), and Babette Bärbel Tischleder (2014) hold that, while a renewed interest in questions of matter’s complex forces has resurfaced across the humanities and social sciences, the idea of lively matter is not new to literature, as evidenced by their studies of literary naturalism, Thoreau’s corpus, and object life in American fiction and, I claim, the literary genre of horror as well. Accordingly, these scholars contend that the materialist insights of literary works and the new materialist rethinking of matter may mutually reinvigorate and enrich each other. The imaginative and “aesthetic” register of literary worlds offers a unique space to envisage and sensuously experience the different forms material existence may assume and its entwinement with human lives. This renders literature a propitious medium for a reflection on existing and alternate modes of engagement with matter and the material realm, which may also further a reconsideration of the affective and ethico-political components of material life. What makes horror fiction interesting in this regard is that, despite its heterogeneous foci, peculiar to this genre is its predilection for probing in lurid detail the exorbitant *materiality* of the body and nature. The body and splatter horror in the works of, for example, Ambrose Bierce, H.G. Wells, Robert Louis Stevenson, Richard Marsh, William Hope Hodgson, Edgar Allan Poe, and H.P. Lovecraft revel in the disgusting physicality of corporeal mutilation, malformation, and mutation. Bodies pierced, dissected, and in pain crowd the pages of horror; its scrutiny of the body’s naked vulnerability, affliction, and impermanence invites clashing sensations pertaining, on the one hand, to an exposed and fragile flesh and, on the other, a radical dis-identification in these spectacles of the human body treated as and becoming mere matter. Indulging in the spectacular destruction and degeneration of the body, Matthew G. Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796) provides an early illustrative case in point: still unappeased by fatally dismembering the Prioress, the insatiable fury of a mob subsequently proceeds to grind her dead body into a bloody pulp, which becomes “no more than a mass of flesh, unsightly, shapeless, and disgusting” (Lewis 1998, p. 306). The novel’s most harrowing scenes linger on Agnes’s

physical contact with and texture of her child's soft, decomposing body. Unwilling to part with its rotting remains, she persists in caressingly cradling its worm-infected "corrupted flesh." Mingling poignancy with perversity, she channels her tender motherly love and mourning into the tactile intimacy she shares with "a mass of putridity," "a loathsome and disgusting object, to every eye but a mother's" (1998, pp. 352–54).

Whether depicting maimed, diseased, and deformed living bodies or dying, dead, and decaying ones, horror attends to the body as flesh, a material object, as malleable, mutable matter. Repeatedly inspecting and magnifying bodily tissue, bone, muscle, and sinew, horror points to the body's disturbing materiality. Yet, horror's prevailing rendering of matter, akin to Sartre's description of clinging viscosity, balks at exhibiting what he calls the "reassuring inertia" of solidity (1966, p. 776). Instead, it gravitates toward the conspicuity of matter in its mercurial permutations, posing a threat to fantasies of the seemingly self-contained, bounded body. It does so in its fondness for poring over the grisly gore and gross guts overspilling the breached body, the matter issuing from oozing orifices in terms of object bodily fluids and waste, as well as the hideous mass of formless putrescence, as cited in Lewis's passage above, and dramatized in, for example, the closing imagery of Poe's "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" (1845). Matter in these instances illustrates Kelly Hurley's notion of the "gothicity of matter," which "threatens to spill over and infect form itself," as also instanced in stories featuring bodies undergoing metamorphosis, the amorphous blob or Thing, as well as interstitial phenomena monstrously fusing human and inhuman or animal elements (1996, p. 32).

Precisely because literature offers "a vast playground to rehearse accounts of what makes us act," literary scholars, according to Bruno Latour, "have been much freer in their enquiries about figuration" than other theorists, that is, in contemplating the various configurations agency may assume (2005, pp. 54–55). Latour suggests that we rethink agency inclusively, beyond its exclusivity to human intentionality, as "doing something, that is, making a difference" in modifying a state of affairs (2005, p. 52). This accommodates a reworking of received notions of matter as an inert substance or a socially constructed fact. It foregrounds the ways in which matter might also be formative and evince self-emanating directedness and how, inasmuch as human realms are inextricably entangled with material processes, action necessarily springs from the contingent alliance between them. And, seeing that a greater number of these actors are nonhuman, new materialist thought shares, in certain respects, a continuity with ecocritical and posthumanist orientations in recognizing the nonhuman natural world, not as a tractable, passive backdrop, but instead as a vibrant, responsive agential force, whose interactive bustle includes not only human-nonhuman interfaces but also the constant state of intra-activity of nonhuman with nonhuman phenomena.

The figurations dramatized in horror ubiquitously pivot on the menacing shapes of awry material agency, assuming, for instance, the preternatural forms of inanimate objects endowed with inner life, sentient buildings, the reani-

mated undead, as well as the uncontrollable forces of the physical environment, nonhuman creatures, and the body as living matter thwarting human volition and an anthropocentric dominion over the material world. With regard to the body's self-organizing systems, "we exert little or no choice" in relation to, for example, "respiration, circulation, digestion, the immune system"; in other words, as Trumpeter writes: "the body itself has an agency that extends beyond the wishes of the thinking subject that body happens to be attached to" (2015, p. 229). One finds these quotidian processes of the body "supernaturalized" into hyperbolic forms in the horror narrative, in which the inert corpse provokes a fear inferior to that of the alarming impetus and tenacity of bodily matter. Even "worse than the corruption of death itself," as the physiologically aging yet undying cadaverous portrait in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) exemplifies, is that it "would breed horrors and yet would never die" (1997, p. 84). An amalgamation of dead human bodies, Frankenstein's monster is a "filthy mass that moved and talked" (Shelley 1996, p. 99). Similarly, Hyde's dormant existence within Jekyll entails his entropic devolution into an amorphous, undead "slime of the pit" (Stevenson 2003, p. 69). Even more terrifying than death itself is a pulsating, malevolent mass teeming with life yet signaling death while breeding, propagating, and contaminating. The repulsive corporeality of these portraits is intensified by the superimposed imagery of unnatural reproduction, grotesque pregnancy, and birth. Of course, it is not coincidental that the particular physiological processes frequently rendered baleful in horror center around those pertaining to the female or maternal body, inasmuch as the latter, as Grosz specifies, has been culturally coded as incarnating indeterminate and engulfing forms of materiality (1994, pp. 193–94, 203). This affirms how the "idea of the material comes to us already tainted, containing within it pre-existing ideas about sexual difference" (Fausto-Sterling 2000, p. 23). And consequently, how understandings of the material body are inseparable from a socially determined and politically organized space. Yet, in explaining why horror imagery clusters around certain bodily features, we nevertheless need to account for materially distinctive bodies in order to address its asymmetric ascription of symbolic meanings and why particular semiotic-somatic configurations are especially sticky with regard to the affective sensibilities of horror. As Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000) points out in relation to the sexed body, although there can be no neutral account of sex that is not always already informed by gender, this does not entail that the specific material aspects of the body, such as chromosomes, gonads, and hormonal and chemical compositions, play no role in our conceptions of sexuality. Correspondingly, while the bodies in horror fiction are invariably shaped by social meanings, these bodies—which bleed, grow, gestate, age, and sicken—bear traces of their debt to a material nature that is not elusive. By attenuating agentic corporeal matter and the physiological facets and workings of the body, albeit in an obscene fashion and in fantastic dimensions, horror bespeaks how its literary imagination is molded by our relations with the reality, dynamics, and specificities of corporeal materialities, featuring their own distinctive capac-

ities and resiliencies, which interact with and partly shape the social expression and experience of particular bodies.

Besides the visceral body horror discussed above, the subgenre of eco-horror is also amenable to a new materialist study in the way that it, likewise, pervasively features the threatening materiality of a nature that "kicks back" in its portraits centering on the agency of climatic and natural phenomena, as well as the ecological linkages and interchanges across human and animal bodies, nonhuman organisms, and the natural environment, as can be theoretically accommodated by Stacy Alaimo's (2010) new materialist notion of transcorporeality, if adapted to a sinister mode. The agentic materiality portrayed in eco-horror is exemplified by the engulfing mold or contagious fungal ecosystems in Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), Machen's *The Hill of Dreams* (1907), Hodgson's "The Voice in the Night" (1907), "The Derelict" (1912), Phillip Fisher's "Fungus Isle" (1923), as well as murderous vegetation and toxic, carnivorous, or humanoid plants in Arthur Conan Doyle's "The American's Tale" (1880), Phil Robinson's "The Man-Eating Tree" (1881), Wells's "The Flowering of the Strange Orchid" (1894), Frank Aubrey's *The Devil-Tree of El Dorado* (1897), Hodgson's *The Boats of the "Glen Carrig"* (1907), and Lyle Wilson Holden's "The Devil Plant" (1923). The unease aroused by material agency in eco-horror characteristically centers on two related threats: the uncanny sentience or animation of nonhuman nature and the absorption of human characters into an unbounded natural world, as instanced by Luigi Uglioni's *L'Uomo vegetale (The Vegetable Man)* (1917) and the inauspicious trees in Algernon Blackwood's "The Willows" (1907) and "The Man Whom the Trees Loved" (1912). Poisoned by and transforming into a monstrous plant, the narrator in *The Vegetable Man* likens his own infection of invasive predator plant cells to that of a person suffering sleeping sickness, whose red blood cells, when under assault and observed through a microscope, are "agitated into a fantastic and continuous turmoil by countless beings animated by a surprising vitality of movement" (Uglioni 2011, p. 100). Examining human organic life at a level invisible to the naked eye reveals its incessant self-directed activity, which uncannily defamiliarizes us with our own body. In the former Blackwood tale, the willows "kept up a sort of independent movement of their own, rustling among themselves when no wind stirred," and in the darkness, they assume for the narrator an "aspect of purposeful and living creatures" (Blackwood 1973, p. 31). While their possible sentience is perceived as hostile by Sophia Bittacy in the latter Blackwood story, her husband and titular character, David Bittacy, in contrast, finds the idea that "that life is about us everywhere, and that there is really no dividing line between what we call organic and inorganic" comforting (Blackwood 2004). Resonating with vital materialist overtones in its distribution of an efficacious life force across networks of human and inorganic entities, one of the novella's characters speculates:

that even in decay there's life ... there's force and motion in the falling of a dying leaf, in the breaking up and crumbling of everything indeed. And take an inert stone: it's crammed with heat and weight and potencies of all sorts. What holds its particles together indeed? ... Both things may be a mode of life. (Blackwood 2004)

Both Mrs. and Mr. Bittacy possess a sensitive receptivity to this dim hidden life of the material world, but, for Sophia, it is disturbingly aware and "loaded with massive purpose," especially as the forest's "love" of her husband is expressed in their dangerous intent to "amalgamate" with him. The uncanny animism of Nature disrupts an anthropocentric worldview and unsettles the distinction between dead and alive, human self and nonhuman other, and, likewise, the forest's envelopment of David erases the demarcations between human and illimitable nonhuman domains. Yet, significantly, the account of the ominous forest is mainly told from the perspective of Sophia, who can only see David's fusion with the forest as implying the dangerous loss of self, whereas "amalgamation," from the perspective of David, attuned to the collective sentience of the natural world, signifies a blissful union, as merely consolidating an already existing tenuous link between human and nonhuman nature, whose unbroken continuity renders human specificity and individuality an illusion.

Arguably belonging to both body and eco-horror, the evocative descriptions of carnal physicality and lush environments in Machen's *The Great God Pan* (1890) dovetail with new materialist concerns in the ways in which the story draws attention to the peculiar agency of corporeal life and nonhuman materialities, queries the relation between matter and form, and dramatizes matter's liveliness, multiple manifestations, and how the natural world coexists with and impresses itself on human subjects. The novella opens with Clarke witnessing Dr. Raymond performing neurological surgery on his young orphaned ward, Mary, an experiment that Raymond presumes will uncover the gossamer of the unreal physical "world of sense" to reveal a profounder existence, whereby "Mary will see the god Pan!" (Machen 2006, p. 12). In the wake of her operation, Clarke registers the impact of her vision: her "eyes shone with an awful light, looking far away ... in an instant the wonder [upon her face] faded, and gave place to the most awful terror. The muscles of her face were hideously contorted" (2006, p. 16). It is a sight that renders her mind catatonic and one that is repeated throughout the story: the narrative revolves around three male amateur detectives' attempts to solve the strange deaths of gentlemen among London's elite society connected with the mysterious Helen Vaughan, an enigmatic femme fatale who we later learn is the unnatural offspring begot by Mary and, presumably, Pan and whose victims are seduced to engage in obscure activities apparently accompanied by her father, causing them to go mad, suffer seizures, and die from suicide or sheer terror, which betrays itself bodily by their contorted faces.

To unlock these characters' puzzling epiphanies of Pan, Machen himself invites a recourse to Wordsworth's celebrated "Immortality Ode" (1807) in his

introduction: "I believe that youth attains, so far as it does attain, just because it does not understand. The logical understanding is the prison-house of Wordsworth's supreme and magistral ode" (Machen 2006, pp. 1–2). Drawing on the Platonic doctrine of anamnesis, Wordsworth's Ode addresses the child as the "Seer Blest," whose radiant visionary powers bathe "meadow, grove, and stream" in "celestial light" and enables its closer contact with the mystery of the natural world and the "imperial palace from which he came" (Wordsworth 2000, pp. 287–90). Shackled by the "Shades of the prison-house," the mature mind possesses the power to understand the divine currents running through and uniting youth and the surrounding natural world, which unthinking youth itself is incapable of understanding. But, to understand this primordial bond is also to lose it, to observe rather than belong, and to witness the "vision splendid" "die away / And fade into the light of common day" (Wordsworth 2000, p. 289). Echoing Wordsworth's Ode, there is another moment of sudden revelation preceding that of Mary's. Anticipating Proustian *mémoire involontaire*, Clarke, at the incitation of an "odd odor" in the surgical suite, is transported to his last boyhood ramble in the meadows and woodland neighboring his childhood home:

It was a burning day ... the heat had dimmed the outlines of all things and all distances with a faint mist ... the sense of dazzling all-pervading sunlight seemed to blot out the shadows and the lights of the laboratory, and he felt again the heated air beating in gusts about his face, saw the shimmer rising from the turf, and heard the myriad murmur of the summer ... and the trickle of water dropping from the limestone rock sounded as a clear melody. (Machen 2006, pp. 13–14)

In drawing attention to sounds, shades of light, textures, and temperatures, the "aesthetic" elements of this passage saturate the senses, the effect upon which is nuanced by nature's entwined stimuli, appealing to several sensory domains simultaneously: the mingled indistinct hum of the landscape resonates with the trickling motion of water, which carries a euphonic auditory appeal; kinesthesia and somesthesia are invoked by the "heated air beating in gusts about his face," in which tactility, temperature, and an agitative flurry coincide; thermal, visual, and motional sensory details likewise converge in the quivering movement of the faintly gleaming heat pertaining to the "shimmer rising from the turf." Sensorily keen, vivid, and vibrant, this multisensory scenery is, however, curiously not honed by the sense of sight. Rather, vision is blunted by the bedimming qualities of the heat and mist. While the "all-pervading sunlight" of this recollected experience is capable of eclipsing the immediate laboratorial surroundings, its "dazzling" character paradoxically overwhelms vision. Here, the sense of sight, for Plato "the noblest of the senses" and traditionally supreme in the hierarchy of the senses, is backgrounded in favor of the prominence given to olfactory sensations (as cited in Drobnick 1998, p. 10). "Above all there came to his nostrils the scent of summer, the smell of flowers mingled,

and the odour of the woods, of cool shaded places, deep in the green depths, drawn forth by the suns' heat; and the scent of the good earth, lying as it were with arms stretched forth, and smiling lips, overpowered all" (Machen 2006, p. 14). As "senses of proximity," taste and smell, Rindisbacher argues, have been "by and large disfavored in our society," doubtlessly on account of the way they affirm the physiological import of the perceptual process and its roots in the bodily realm (1992, p. 5). Unlike the distance implied in vision and hearing, the sensory modalities of smell, taste, and touch involve direct contact and embodied interchanges with the surrounding environment, and, thus, are generally sensed as more earthy, visceral, and concrete. By engaging a character's nose and fingertips and invoking senses that tend to resist abstraction and instead promote embodied modes of being, Machen's placial rendition pursues a mode of presentation rather than suprasensory representation, which performatively generates the sensuous density of a phenomenological reality.

Again attenuating an intersensory mode, the forceful impact exercised by the "scent of summer" arises from the dynamic interaction and entangled agencies of natural forces: the heat elicits the odor emanating from the cool depths of this landscape, which intermingles with the fragrance of flowers and forest. While the inviting embrace and affectionate visage imputed to "the scent of the good earth" can be construed as an anthropomorphic figuration, its nonverbal gestures also convey nonhuman agency and expressivity. Like Wordsworth's *Ode*, Clarke's childhood memory of nature is spontaneous, intense, and self-effacing; as part of nature, he divines its deeper forces. Engaging with natural space by sensitively heeding to the sensations of the body, Machen suggests, enhances a receptivity to the nonlinguistic expressivity of earthly matter, which initially announces its presence to Clarke through the invitational call of its murmuring sounds and scents, and subsequently assumes the shape of "a presence, that was neither man nor beast, neither the living nor the dead, but all things mingled, the form of all things but devoid of all form," whose "voice seemed to cry 'Let us go hence'" (Machen 2006, pp. 14–15). Bucolically pleasant and sensually gratifying, the odorous experience of Clarke's reminiscence contrasts the other odor-induced affects in the story, which are significantly perceived as insidious, foul, and stifling. Visiting the house once inhabited by Helen, Villiers recounts to his friend Austin how its strange overpowering effect invaded his senses, which he describes as "more physical than mental. It was as if I were inhaling at every breath some deadly fume" (p. 39). Similarly, "an odour of corruption" accompanies the graphic denouement of Helen's death (p. 61). Although the text obscures the activities Helen engages her victims in, akin to Clarke's odor-induced recollection, Helen presumably summons the vestiges of a past that had hitherto been beyond conscious recollection during their encounters. In these instances, however, the register of Wordsworth's "vision splendid" shifts to the menacing mode of horror, in which Helen occasions the uncanny displaced return of the past by bringing her victims into a direct contact with a lost primal intimacy with nature unmediated by memory and unscreened by the "Shades of the prison-house."

While these events are characterized by epistemic horror, the climactic scene of Helen's death features the ontological horror of the explicit: resembling her father, who exists as "all things mingled, the form of all things but devoid of all form," Helen's metamorphosing monstrous embodiments and deliquescence into an undifferentiated viscous jelly, as Hurley observes, annuls "sexual specificity, species specificity, and the specificity that distinguishes form from matter" (1996, p. 13). In contrast to the way Clarke experienced the natural landscape through the senses, the witness to this scene can, despite the utter "negation of light," behold "clearly and without difficulty ... the objects presented to [his] eyes ... without any medium" (p. 62). This final vision penetrates the veil of the physical "world of sense," but contradicting Raymond's Platonic conviction, it does not reveal a deeper spiritual reality underlying the apparent external nature; rather, in a disfiguring version of Wordsworth's Ode, the world not readily accessible to the senses is traumatically revealed to be an appalling *material* reality without celestial radiance. The tale's irreverence toward spirituality is furthermore seen in its parody of the Immaculate Conception: Machen's Mary is impregnated by a deity, which renders Helen a mock Christ figure, and she is indeed the human embodiment of her father and wills his bidding, likely reiterating his behest, "Let us go hence," a quote from the Gospel of John, in which Jesus assures his disciples that the unique path that will reunite them with the Father and their original abode runs through his very person (14:31).

Even when Helen's mutating body reaches its nadir, "the abyss of all being," the "principle of life," nevertheless, "always remained, while the outward form changed" (Machen 2006, p. 62). The horrible palpitation of a raw corporeal substratum of unbridled being grimly materializes a senseless drive for nothing but sheer life. It involves a total reduction to brute biological life itself as encapsulated in the famous phrase specific to the horror genre: "It's Alive!" where "it" conveys its indistinct, unformed, and de-subjectivized nature. While Machen's satyr-deity, indexing "the most awful, most secret forces which lie at the heart of all things," reverberates with a vitalist tenor, it is nevertheless undercut by an unqualified materialism, evincing late-Victorian literary horror's participation in the anxieties emerging in the wake of contemporary biological and evolutionary sciences (p. 57). As both Hurley (1996) and Susan J. Navarette (1998) observe, Machen's novella bespeaks its artful relation to the thought of Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species* (1859) and T.H. Huxley's studies "On the Physical Basis of Life" (1868), especially in its portraits of formlessness, the material basis of human beings, bodily metamorphosis, the agency of biological forces beyond human control, and regression to an animalistic or primal state, whereby the ontological borders between species are seen to be only provisionally differentiated. For Huxley, as Hurley and Navarette remark, even the higher faculties of cognition, volition, and feeling are grounded in physicality. The apparent firmness of the material body is undone in his discussion of protoplasm, which is echoed in Uglioni's account of cellular

battle, and both additionally reveal that “[m]atter is not mute and stolid, but rather clamorous and active” (Hurley 1996, p. 33).

In suggesting another deeper reality of secret forces ordinarily withdrawn from yet shaping the sensed apparent world, Machen’s implicit dualism is nevertheless to be distinguished from the dualist form-matter conception of a traditional vitalism, in which matter is seen as vivified and organized into recognizable forms by an independent immaterial principle. Neither does he adhere to a Cartesian-Newtonian notion of matter, which understands it as a dense bounded substance extended in space, passive and predictable, which, in turn “yields a conceptual and practical domination of nature” subservient to anthropocentric ends and human mastery (Coole and Frost 2010, p. 7). Rather, Machen comes close to a vital materialism in as much as the hidden forces regularly unrepresented by the immediately visible natural world are inherent to matter, which possesses its own powers of animation and degeneration. Helen’s corporeal mutation is not carried out by “external agencies,” rather, “there was some internal force, of which I knew nothing, that caused dissolution and change” (2006, p. 62). The titular divination of Poe’s “Mesmeric Revelation” (1849), similarly, intimates obscure forces brooding behind worldly appearances, yet denies a form-matter dualism. Insisting that there “is no immateriality; it is a mere word,” the mesmerized Vankirk avers, “That which is not material, is not at all.” God, accordingly, “is not spirit, for he exists. Nor is he matter, *as you understand it*”; rather, there are “*gradations* of matter,” whose rarefied form is mistaken for spirit and whose subtle shades escape man’s senses as he reductively conceives matter only in terms of atomic constitution and its particles, despite their “infinite minuteness,” as possessing “solidity, palpability, weight.” When refining these gradations into an “infinitely rarified matter,” one arrives at the “ultimate or unparticled matter [that] not only permeates all things, but impels all things,” that is, God as continuous, mobile matter encompassing everything and constituting their inherent forces of self-movement and volition (Poe 1982, pp. 90–91). Both Machen’s and Poe’s descriptions of matter as an active immanent force in flux and differential becoming, with its own ability to generate form, to reform and unform, resemble new materialist ontologies, as exemplified by Coole and Frost, for whom “matter becomes” rather than “matter is” (2010, p. 10). Their accounts are likewise akin to Jane Bennett’s (2010) “thing power” immanent in matter’s energies and the emphasis on morphogenesis of Manuel DeLanda (2002), who, together with Rosi Braidotti (2002) and Claire Colebrook (2008) envisage matter as intensive, that is, in terms of “positive difference” and as a dynamic productive power.

Despite these extensive affinities between literary horror and new materialism, literature adheres to its own internal logic and conventions. In this respect, literary horror distinguishes itself from new materialist thought by exploring matter in a sensuous, imaginative manner, visualizing matter in the mode of fear, and notably figuring its agency as an ontological scandal.² Representing agentic matter as a supernatural occurrence may, on the one

hand, encourage the conception of material agency as an anomaly rather than the ruling norm, as well as accustom horror's readership to the automatic dissociating responses of fear toward our own agentic bodily matter. On the other hand, this fear, which horror exploits, pertains not so much to matter's agency as it does to the implied impairment of our own, in which horror's healthy, albeit obscene, reminders of agentic and bodily materiality bruise humankind's narcissistic fantasies of omnipotence. It is precisely within the safety of horror's fictional space and icky pleasures that we can rehearse our aesthetic relations with matter, whose fascinating shapes whet our curiosity and an openness to envisage diverse and messier materialisms. Drawing on an open, growing mesh of philosophical, scientific, and political thought, new materialist scholarship has also revived past materialist traditions to energize theoretical debates on materialisms, entering into dialogue with, for example, Lucretius, Spinoza, and Darwin, a tradition that may likewise include literary horror's and Machen's accounts of corporeal matter as a self-transformative visceral agent intimately enmeshing us with an agential material world. Such a recognition of the porosity, shared materiality, and entangled existence between embodied selves and nonhuman material ecologies, as Machen suggests, may be experienced with ambivalent emotions. Appropriately, the closing description of Clarke's amble in nature is one of mixed sensations, commingling the scents of both a fragrant Wordsworth and fetid Pan: "the faint sweet scent of wild roses came to me on the wind and mixed with the heavy perfume of the elder, whose mingled odour is like the odour of the room of the dead, a vapour of incense and corruption" (Machen 2006, p. 64).

NOTES

1. As opposed to the patent presence of monstrosity that characterizes ontological horror; see also Meyers and Waller (2001).
2. As outlined in more detail in Sencindiver (2014), the horror of material agency may derive from the resurfacing of animistic modes of thinking that have been surmounted by a rational adult and secularized worldview. Animistic matter in horror fiction, correspondingly, imitates this unexpected, displaced return of surmounted animistic impulses disrupting a realistic context where it does not belong.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alaimo, Stacy. 2010. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Aldana Reyes, Xavier. 2015. Gothic Affect: An Alternative Approach to Critical Models of the Contemporary Gothic. In *New Directions in 21st-Century Gothic: The Gothic Compass*, ed. Lorna Piatti-Farnell and Donna Lee Brien, 11–23. New York: Routledge.
- . 2016. *Horror Film and Affect: Towards a Corporeal Model of Viewership*. London: Routledge.

- Barad, Karen. 1998. Getting Real: Technoscientific Practices and the Materialization of Reality. *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 10 (2): 87–128.
- . 2003. Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28 (3): 801–831.
- Bennett, Jane. 2010. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Blackwood, Algernon. 1973. The Willows. In *Best Ghost Stories of Algernon Blackwood*, ed. E.F. Bleiler, 1–52. New York: Dover Publications.
- . 2004. *The Man Whom the Trees Loved*. Urbana, IL: Project Gutenberg. <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/11377/pg11377.html>. Accessed May 10, 2017.
- Braidotti, Rosi. 2002. *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Butler, Judith. 2006. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Colebrook, Claire. 2008. On Not Becoming Man: The Materialist Politics of Unactualized Potential. In *Material Feminisms*, ed. Stacy Alaimo and Susan J. Hekman, 52–84. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Coole, Diana, and Samantha Frost. 2010. Introducing the New Materialisms. In *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, ed. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, 1–43. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- DeLanda, Manuel. 2002. *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*. London: Continuum.
- Drobnick, Jim. 1998. Reveries, Assaults, and Evaporating Presences: Olfactory Dimensions in Contemporary Art. *Parachute* 89: 10–19.
- . 2006. Introduction: Olfactocentrism. In *The Smell Culture Reader*, ed. Jim Drobnick, 1–12. Oxford: Berg.
- Dufrenne, Mikel. 1973. *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*. Trans. Edward S. Casey et al. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Fausto-Sterling, Anne. 2000. *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. New York: Basic Books.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. 1994. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press.
- Gumbrecht, Hans. 2004. *Production of Presence What Meaning Cannot Convey*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Halberstam, Judith. 1995. *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Hanich, Julian. 2009. Dis/liking Disgust: The Revulsion Experience at the Movies. *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 7 (3): 293–309.
- Hurley, Kelly. 1996. *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the Fin de Siècle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Johnson, Rochelle L. 2014. ‘This Enchantment Is No Delusion’: Henry David Thoreau, the New Materialisms, and Ineffable Materiality. *Isle: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 21 (3): 606–635.
- Latour, Bruno. 2005. *Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lewis, Matthew G. 1998. *The Monk: A Romance*. Ed. Christopher MacLachlan. London: Penguin.
- Machen, Arthur. 1895. *The Three Impostors or The Transmutations*. London: John Lane.
- . 2006. *The Great God Pan and The Hill of Dreams*. Mineola, NY: Dover.

- Meyers, Chris, and Waller, Sara. 2001. Disenstoriéd Horror: Art Horror Without Narrative. *Film and Philosophy: Special Edition on Horror*, pp. 117–126.
- Moslund, Sten Pultz. 2015. *Literature's Sensuous Geographies: Postcolonial Matters of Place*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Navarette, Susan J. 1998. *The Shape of Fear: Horror and the Fin de Siècle Culture of Decadence*. University Press of Kentucky.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. 1982. *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. London: Penguin.
- Rindisbacher, Hans J. 1992. *The Smell of Books: A Cultural-historical Study of Olfactory Perception in Literature*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1966. *Being and Nothingness*. Trans. Hazel E. Barnes. New York: Washington Square Press.
- Sencindiver, Susan Yi. 2014. The Doll's Uncanny Soul. In *The Gothic and the Everyday*, ed. Maria Beville and Lorna Piatti-Farnell, 103–130. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Shelley, Mary. 1996. *Frankenstein*. Ed. J. Paul Hunter. London: Norton.
- Stevenson, Robert Louis. 2003. *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Tales of Terror*. Ed. Robert Mighall. London: Penguin.
- Tischleder, Babette Bärbel. 2014. *The Literary Life of Things: Case Studies in American Fiction*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.
- Trumpeter, Kevin. 2015. The Language of the Stones: The Agency of the Inanimate in Literary Naturalism and the New Materialism. *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography* 87 (2): 225–252.
- Uglioni, Luigi. 2011. The Vegetable Man. In *The Weird: A Compendium of Strange and Dark Stories*, ed. Jeff VanderMeer and Ann VanderMeer, 97–100. New York: Tom Doherty Associates.
- Wilde, Oscar. 1997. *Collected Works of Oscar Wilde*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions.
- Wordsworth, William. 2000. Ode. Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood. In *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. M.H. Abrams, Stephen Greenblatt, et al., vol. 2, 7th ed., 287–292. London: W. W. Norton.



Horror “After Theory”

Lyle Enright

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the place of horror in the twenty-first-century novel. Going by volume of material alone, such a project would seem an enormous undertaking: pop-culture magazines such as *Paste* (Fuxe 2016) and *Complex* (Barone 2012) have compiled lists of no fewer than 20 “top” novels apiece, detailing the continuing impact of the horror genre in the new millennium, while a crowd-sourced list on the social media platform *Goodreads* boasts 298 titles (and counting) under the heading, “Best Horror Books of the 21st Century” (2012). Aided in no small way by genre presses and the advent of independent and online publishing, horror has exploded as a niche genre market that continues to produce copious amounts of material.¹ As such, there is no easy way to talk about horror literature of the twenty-first century without getting specific. Horror, both as a genre and as an industry, has been opened for analysis in those trends of contemporary scholarship that focus on cultural networks and modes of production; however, this has also tended to mean that specifically *literary* concerns, as has often been the case in accounts of the genre, are left to the wayside.²

While the horror genre has rarely been known historically as serious literature, since the turn of the century, a number of horror novels have actively aimed to be more “literary” in their scope and presentation, a move which has not escaped the public eye. In an article for *The Daily Beast* entitled “Horror Fiction Goes Highbrow in New Novels and *Granta*,” Josh Dzieza notes that authors such as Colson Whitehead and even Don DeLillo have experimented with cross-pollination between horror tropes and other literary forms to speak to what they perceive to be a complacent culture, insisting that “[t]o quaran-

L. Enright (✉)
Loyola University Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA

tine horror in a genre is to ignore how much of the culture revolves around things we're afraid of" (2011). Dan Simmons's *Drood* (2009) speaks more directly to high literary culture by offering a revisionist account of Charles Dickens's work, while Bret Easton Ellis's *Lunar Park* (2005) and David Wong's *John Dies at the End* (2007) play with metafictional constructions, the latter wading more deeply into the waters of postmodern play and absurdity. Most notably, titles such as Mark Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000) and Paul Tremblay's *A Head Full of Ghosts* (2015) have not only taken literary *conventions* as their objects but have also turned toward the knots of literary *theory*. *House of Leaves* especially has generated a tremendous amount of literary criticism investigating the ways in which Danielewski's comprehensive engagement with literary theory is integral to the sprawling and visually disorienting world of the novel. Meanwhile, Tremblay's *A Head Full of Ghosts* presents itself at least in part as an academic deconstruction of a reality television show centering on the possession of a teenage girl. But, whereas Danielewski's novel is heady and experimental, reveling in its own participation in the projects of literary theory, Tremblay's work comes to ground in a way which is more combative, making *A Head Full of Ghosts* a striking example of what might be called the novel "after" theory. Many have cited the ways in which the discourses of deconstruction and phenomenology are manifested in the world of *House of Leaves*, as Danielewski uses fictive space to negotiate and renew certain possibilities within the philosophical tradition itself.³ Tremblay, however, emerges as a novelist who is deeply suspicious of postmodernism's and critical theory's impacts on literature in their entirety, and *A Head Full of Ghosts* seems more interested in problematizing theory's legacy than in negotiating new terms, as *House of Leaves* does. My argument is that Tremblay's novel fits into an emergent genre of contemporary literature that challenges the monolithic explanatory apparatuses of critical theory and that this challenge also has the effect of re-enchanting the horror genre for the literary sensibilities of the twenty-first century.

A Head Full of Ghosts is narrated from the perspective of Meredith "Merry" Barrett as she reflects on the events which led her, at eight years old, to be included in a reality television series called *The Possession*. The subject of the show is Merry's 14-year-old sister Marjorie, who has begun to demonstrate signs of acute mental illness. The girls' father, a born-again Catholic, instead believes that his daughter is demon-possessed and begins to arrange for an exorcism, agreeing to turn the situation into a television spectacle as a means of paying off his family's massive debts. Tension mounts through a series of increasingly unexplainable events, and the narrative reaches its climax as *The Possession*'s run ends in terror and disaster. Fifteen years later, Merry must relive those horrific months of her childhood as she is interviewed by a best-selling author, Rachel Neville, who wishes to write her own account of the events. Through their conversations, it becomes clear that Merry's trauma has made her an unreliable narrator, a condition which she embraces to the point of seeing the "Passage of time as a prop to the story, the story that has been told and

retold so often it has lost its meaning, even to those of us who lived through it" (Tremblay 2015, p. 5). For Merry, memory is like any other medium and has transformed the ostensible reality of the past, a simulacrum now standing in its place: "I don't know how to explain to [Rachel] that my older sister hasn't aged at all in fifteen-plus years and there never was a *before everything happened*" (p. 8).

The majority of the novel follows Merry's retreats into her memory, interrupted by discussions and clarifications with Rachel in the present. But, the novel adds further layers of mediation in the form of three chapters—Chaps. 2, 14, and 23—set apart from the main narrative. The second chapter of *A Head Full of Ghosts* introduces the reader to *The Last Final Girl*, a blog "[e]xploring all things horror and horrific" which, in this series of posts, takes aim at the television show constructed from the events of Merry's childhood (Tremblay 2015, p. 9). Offset by a Courier typeface, these chapters are a barrage of rapid-fire, undisciplined blog writing peppered with a graduate-school vocabulary:

Yes, I know, it's hard to believe that everyone's favorite (well, my favorite) reality TV crash 'n burn *The Possession* originally aired fifteen years ago. Damn, fifteen years ago, right? Oh those heady days of NSA surveillance, torrent, crowdfunding, and pre-collapse economy! You're going to need a bigger boat for my grand deconstruction of the six-episode series. There's so much to talk about. I could write a dissertation on the pilot alone. (Tremblay 2015, pp. 9–10)

These opening lines provide readers with a rough character sketch of the blog's author, Karen Brissette. We can gather that she is a horror aficionado, a fan of everything from "gooey gory midnight show cheese to the highfalutin art-house highbrow" (p. 9). This equivocation between high and low art, a concern with turn-of-the-century culture, and a more-than-casual interest in deconstruction also serve to paint Karen as a fairly stereotypical graduate student and to present Tremblay as an author who is preoccupied with the discourses of academia and literary theory.

In *The Novel After Theory* (2012), Harvard critic Judith Ryan describes the emergence of this particular literary phenomenon which she describes as an "entire array of novels ... that might be said to 'know about' literary and cultural theory" (p. 1). Ryan's major contention is that, while postmodern theory became the center of debate in the late twentieth century, the actual role of literature in those debates has been sorely under-treated, and that an intertextual approach to the two opens new possibilities for investigation: "By clothing theory in the details of material, social, and psychological life, [novels] can often render it easier to understand ... The 'reality effects' of fictional narration allow us to move more easily between binary and non-binary thought" (p. 17). Taking her conclusions even further, Ryan suggests that "[t]he differences between the abstract quality of theory and the concrete detail of fictional narratives reveal weaknesses and sometimes even blind spots in theory" (p. 207). Ryan does, indeed, explore the ways in which novels have pressed back against

the often idealistic tendencies in much postmodern theory, literary and otherwise, but this stronger aspect of “talking back to theory” is often presented as an afterthought, with more prominent space given to the ways in which literature manages to incarnate or dramatize theory rather than push back against its conclusions, the stakes of those observations typically being quite low.

Meanwhile, critic Nicholas Dames gives an account of these stronger elements in his *n+1* article, “The Theory Generation” (2012). Whereas Ryan says that the first wave of “the novel after theory” is over, Dames insists that it has been followed up by the work of the “Theory Generation,” a cadre of authors who were not writing during the high-points of critical theory but were rather students who lived through theory’s institutional incarnations. Receiving their education largely in the decades after 1980, these authors are now reflecting back on those lessons and coming to grips with new concerns, such as theory’s “inability to solve tedious adult dilemmas” (Dames 2012). Rather than the sort of reciprocal development which Ryan sees between theory and forms of fiction, Dames observes that, in the twenty-first century novel, “Theory is judged from within the forms it tried to dismantle ... by criteria Theory could only recognize as regressive or naïve: What kind of a person does Theory make? What did it once mean to have read theorists? What does it mean now? [etc.]” (Dames 2012).

In *A Head Full of Ghosts*, the chapters featuring Karen Brissette’s blog seem designed to address such questions. While being a sort of love letter to the *Exorcist* films, the novel itself is exhaustively intertextual, with near-constant references made to popular and literary culture alike.⁴ Both Merry’s and Karen’s vocabularies also reflect an education in literary theory: Karen’s “deconstructive” approach indicates an acquaintance with the work of Jacques Derrida, while literary-critical applications of Sigmund Freud and psychoanalysis are more explicitly mentioned. Karen’s feminist leanings are also influenced by theories of the “male gaze,” and she explicitly directs her readers to “please see Laura Mulvey’s essay ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’” for further information (p. 95). Meanwhile, Merry’s reflections on her past often indicate an awareness of late twentieth-century theories of contingency and the impact of technology upon culture, memory, and history. One passage features rhetoric which would seem right at home in the work of Jean Baudrillard or Fredric Jameson:

I tell Rachel that there is no starting point or ground zero for what happened to Marjorie and our family. ... [M]y memories mix up with my nightmares, with extrapolation, with skewed oral histories from my grandparents and aunts and uncles, and with all the urban legends and lies propagated within the media, pop culture, and the near continuous stream of websites/blogs/YouTube channels devoted to the show. ... In a way, my personal history not being my own, literally and figuratively haunted by outside forces, is almost as horrible as what actually happened. Almost. (Tremblay 2015, p. 16)⁵

In these passages and others, Tremblay seems to address Dames’s questions by suggesting that an awareness of theory “makes” people like Karen who are

conspiratorial, possibly unhealthy practitioners of the hermeneutics of suspicion, or else "makes" people like Merry, who become paralyzed by the weight of their own histories. In fact, for Merry, an awareness of theory appears to add to the horror of her situation.

While *A Head Full of Ghosts* is very much a horror novel that is also *about* literary theory, the novel's *prognosis* of theory becomes another of its major themes. Is it one's ability to shrug off Theory which places them back in touch with reality and can potentially save them? According to Dames, the authors of the "Theory Generation" are far from optimistic about such a solution: "These novels aren't at all sure that Theory can be outgrown like fashion" (Dames 2012). Lacking the same confident edge as twentieth-century academic "campus" novels, "[They] don't entirely regret, nor do they entirely accept, Theory; they satirize it with unease" (Dames 2012). A similar dynamic plays at the heart of *A Head Full of Ghosts*, and it is worth taking a moment to consider how the postmodern turn itself impacted the horror genre in order to understand the territory in which the novel locates itself.

Since the late twentieth century, horror fiction has alternately functioned as both an object of postmodern critique, and as a welcome ally in that critique. Postmodernism has generally been characterized by its subversive quality, deconstructing meta-narratives of metaphysical or cultural truth and demonstrating them to be contingent and arbitrary. Postmodern art and fiction have typically proposed objects or narratives which do not fit neatly into dominant cultural codes and thus force a rupture of those codes, and yet Linda Hutcheon says in *The Politics of Postmodernism* that this is "a strange kind of critique," one which often "installs as much as it manages to subvert" (Hutcheon 1989, pp. 1, 4).⁶ It is this dual power to both install and undermine which has made postmodernism and art-horror surprisingly (un)comfortable bedfellows. In *The Philosophy of Horror* (1990), Noël Carroll argues that horror fiction is defined by its deliberate deployment of elements intended to elicit anxiety, discomfort, and revulsion in the midst of relative normalcy, with normalcy being reinstated after the abnormality is resisted or destroyed. In this way, "horror is invariably an agent of the established order" and thus a prime target for postmodern ideological critique (Carroll 1990, p. 196). However, horror has not been universally confined to this role of status-quo propaganda; a number of works have also functioned as social critiques by identifying the horrific or monstrous element with the establishment rather than the marginalized "other" (Carroll 1990, pp. 197–98). Sometimes the normal/abnormal binary maintains, but the monster is presented in such a way as to make its dangerous and subversive potential empowering, if not attractive. For example, Barbara Creed's essay, "From Here to Modernity," critically reads the horrific elements of the *Alien* series as resonant with the female body, presenting it as a space of "non-knowledge" within the established order which is abnormal but also powerful and awesome (Creed 1993, p. 407).

But one of the odd possible outcomes of such postmodern restructuring is its resultant ability to domesticate horrific elements and re-appropriate differ-

ence as merely misunderstood or marginalized rather than dangerous. In Creed's readings, for instance, monstrous elements signal moments of resistance against normative attitudes and powers, and the monster itself becomes a source of empowerment rather than fear. This dynamic deeply influenced postmodernism's reception among readers of horror and the perceived decline of the genre which followed. In *Dark Dreams 2.0*, film critic Charles Derry goes so far as to blame postmodernism's leveling critique for moral disarray, its proliferations of meanings and readings for evacuating horror of its power and danger and thus reducing it to a commodity status: "When everything is democratically equal, even trivial, what *are* we to value?" (Derry 2009, p. 111). Carroll's treatment of the situation is more even-handed, observing the ways in which postmodernism offered horror new modes of expression, but his rhetoric makes it clear that he does not see these developments as morally neutral and views the impact of postmodernism in much the same way as Derry (Carroll 1990, pp. 210–14). For both critics, postmodernism has domesticated the powers of the sublime and the unknown which give horror its force, turning it into a political symptom in need of diagnosis and critique.

For Tremblay, horror may indeed have a core socio-political dimension, but the reduction of the horrific and the unexplainable to the symptomatic and the political do not reflect theory's demystifying powers of critique. Rather, they manifest theory's potential as a tool for repression in its own right, and this is the point against which *A Head Full of Ghosts* sharpens its darkly satirical edge. From the beginning, the events behind *The Possession* are scrutinized through conflicting perspectives; on the one hand, Merry's self-consciousness regarding her fragile memory produces additional anxiety as she reflects on Marjorie's slow descent into cruelty and madness. But Merry's timidity is juxtaposed against Karen's brash, confident interpretation of the television series, convinced as she is that the entire thing is a farce badly cobbled together from the conservative, misogynistic tropes of existing horror films. Consequently, similar details are handled quite differently by Merry and Karen, and the differences in the accounts demonstrate how alienated the two perspectives are from one another. However, the reader isn't given long to oppose the characters in this way, as part way through the novel Merry admits to Rachel that she *is* Karen Brissette (p. 113).

This startling revelation throws the entire juxtaposition between Merry's and Karen's accounts into disarray, and the rest of the novel explores its implications. Just before Merry's reveal, Rachel questions her: "You don't believe your sister was possessed, do you?" to which Merry replies, "By a supernatural entity? No, I don't" (p. 112). Merry plays out these conclusions through the personality of Karen Brissette: enlightened by the approaches of critical theory, Merry has managed to see that her experience, while horrific, was contrived out of a number of pre-existing horror tropes. Her critical reading of the television show *The Possession* exposes and diagnoses each of the cultural stressors that were at work in her home life, helping her make sense of Marjorie's many confessions to her sister—however influenced by her illness—that she was

feigning possession to spite her parents and contribute to the family's financial security. The Last Final Girl becomes Merry's way of coming to terms with realities that her eight-year-old self could not process.

The novel, however, does not present this as an easy solution. Karen's voice can hardly be read as a more mature supplement to Merry's memory, as remediated differences in the accounts suddenly become outright contradictions. Merry remembers a number of events which never make it into the final cut of the show and, consequently, Karen never reports on them. However, a number of these events defy easy explanations. These include a night on which Marjorie, screaming in ways that sound like she is "harmonizing with herself," is found "clinging to the wall like a spider" (pp. 49, 52). As such, once the reader learns that Merry and Karen are the same person, Karen's treatises begin to read like over-simplistic naturalizations of the events. Near the end of the novel, Rachel calls Merry out on her inconsistency: "Do you, Merry Barrett, believe everything written under Karen's byline?" Merry responds: "I have no interest in writing fiction. Yes, I believe in everything I wrote, otherwise I wouldn't have written it" (p. 257). The reader is led to believe that Merry believes in Karen's account of *The Possession*, and it is our faith in that admission which makes the extant contradictions so glaring.

One pivotal scene near the novel's climax showcases this brilliantly: when the exorcism is finally conducted over Marjorie, things do not go as anyone plans. Despite Marjorie's insistence to Merry that she has been faking her possession, her fear and lack of control during the actual exorcism finally convince Merry that something is indeed very wrong. As Marjorie escapes her bindings and chases Merry through their home, Merry sees the ostensibly false weirdness of the situation become all too real when Marjorie leaps over a banister toward her: "I remember her there, over and beyond the railing, hanging in the air, in empty space, time frozen like a snapshot. She was *there* and she's been there in my mind ever since" (p. 232). While Merry admits her memory is compromised, it still presents her with a powerful image of her sister seemingly levitating before falling to the floor below. In the following chapter, Karen writes about the scene on her blog:

I'm saying the film hasn't been doctored *and* Marjorie ain't floatin' ... [But] it's easier to believe that she's floating. It's how you remember it. How you choose to remember it. Ultimately you think she's floating because you want to believe it. Admit it. You believe, despite yourself, and even if it is only for a moment, that Marjorie is possessed by some supernatural entity. You believe because it's easier than dealing with the idea that you just willingly watched a sick, troubled teenage girl purposefully choose to jump from a ledge. (Tremblay 2015, p. 253)

The full relevance of the Merry/Karen split emerges in these passages. While Karen is able to articulate a fully naturalized version of events by distancing herself from them—through the remediation of both the televised series and the means of critical theory—Merry, in her memory, continues to face events for which no explanation is forthcoming.⁷

The novel closes with a conversation to this effect between Merry and Rachel, as each present hitherto unseen information regarding the aftermath of the filming, as well as the ultimate fate of Marjorie and their family. Each piece of evidence only makes the picture more complicated, not less, and though postmodern theory has often praised this kind of ambiguity, the legacy of theory is here critiqued for offering diagnostic narratives which actually seek to explain rather than maintain that ambiguity. As Karen, Merry utilizes deconstructive methods to make sense of her world, at the expense of a full engagement with that world's strangeness. Rather than serving as a liberating discourse, deconstruction functions as a form of repression for Merry. For Tremblay, true horror resides in the ambiguity which remains in Merry's memory and in the indecision between the natural and the unnatural. In *A Head Full of Ghosts*, theory cannot solve that ambiguity or even domesticate it; it can merely pretend that it is not there.

In his account of the "Theory Generation," Nicholas Dames focuses his attention on a number of novels which, as opposed to the subtler negotiations observed by Judith Ryan, stage a more active confrontation with the legacies of postmodern theory. In Jeffrey Eugenides's *The Marriage Plot* (2011), for instance, the college-age cast of the novel finds that theory is infiltrating every part of their lives; one character's hyper-feminism leads her to contemptuously reject all alternative readings of the world while another turns to deconstruction to ease the pain of mental disorder, while in still another scene a copy of Roland Barthes's structuralist masterpiece *A Lover's Discourse* (1977) becomes a projectile in a love-making session gone wrong (Eugenides 2011, pp. 66–67). While Eugenides's novel is often lightheartedly rebellious, Ben Lerner's *Leaving the Atocha Station* (2011) is more subdued, though perhaps no less skeptical of the legacy it engages. The titular character, Adam, finds that his deconstructive attitudes do not always translate well outside of the academy, or even outside of his own personal neuroses: "My research had taught me that the tissue of contradictions that was my personality was itself, at best, a poem, where 'poem' was understood as referring to a failure of language to be equal to the possibilities it figures ... [But] Maybe only my fraudulence was fraudulent" (Lerner 2011, pp. 164–68).

In Tremblay's novel, Merry finds herself similarly equipped with the apparatuses of critical theory, yet unsure of how they are meant to be deployed in her life. Facing the trauma of her past, Merry joins a cast of characters similar to those in Eugenides's and Lerner's novels whose use of theory is deeply repressive in ways that readers cannot help but interpret as self-deluding, even dangerous. As arguably the first horror novel of the "Theory Generation," Tremblay's *A Head Full of Ghosts* raises the stakes for its characters as it not only reflects upon the legacy of literary theory, but also makes a critical intervention by concretely demonstrating the potential dangers of taking the hermeneutics of suspicion to their furthest conclusions. By treating her own past as a contingent, culturally constructed narrative that can be diagnosed and deconstructed, Merry uses her alter-ego Karen to erect further layers between herself

and her traumatic experience of inexplicable events. Far from being a tool for elucidating reality, theory in Karen's hands becomes a means of remediation and repression, placing Merry's childhood experiences under erasure and enabling her to retreat from them. Though theory has often been touted as a means of exposing and critiquing ideology, serving perhaps a creatively refined version of this function in works such as *House of Leaves*, *A Head Full of Ghosts* joins a growing chorus of voices that suggest that theory itself may be guilty of masking its own ideological commitments and constructing the world it wants to diagnose rather than engaging the world as it is encountered. In doing so, *A Head Full of Ghosts* directly resists the account that horror is reducible to the fear of the political margin. Through Karen, Merry attempts to use this logic in order to distance herself from her past, but beneath these layers there remains a series of events which cannot be diagnosed or explained. By focusing on theory's own ability to mislead and misrepresent, Tremblay levies a serious critique against the sort of suspicion which would reduce the unnatural to mere device and the monstrous to a mere political statement. In *A Head Full of Ghosts*, the power of the unknown regains its ability to frighten from a space outside explanation or symbolism, suggesting that the literature of the twenty-first century may indeed have new and exciting "post-postmodern" horrors yet in store.

NOTES

1. See, for instance, Horror Writers Association President Lisa Morton's recent post, "HWA in the 21st Century" (2017). While Morton reflects on the impact of the internet on horror writers and publishing, others have credited the technology with almost single-handedly reviving the genre: see "Horror Authors Take a Stab at Self-Publishing" (Spector 2016).
2. Examples include Jeffrey Nealon's *Post-Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Just-in-Time Capitalism* (2012), which tracks shifts in the "overcoding" of literary and cultural production(s) following the "long 1980s," as well as Kimberly Jackson's *Technology, Monstrosity, and Reproduction in 21st Century Horror* (2013) and Shira Chess and Eric Newsom's *Folklore, Horror Stories, and the Slender Man* (2015), which examine the role of internet technology and reproducibility in creating new kinds of horror fiction.
3. See, for instance, Josh Toth's article in *Critique* entitled "Healing Postmodern America: Plasticity and Renewal in Danielewski's *House of Leaves*" (2013), which reads the novel alongside Catherine Malabou's resuscitation of Hegelian "plasticity" as a model for the world and experience, in response to Derridian deconstruction.
4. Such references are especially prevalent in Chap. 23. In what could well be a nod toward Deleuzean accounts of socially induced "schizophrenia" in the late twentieth century, Karen frantically draws "lines of flight" between *The Possession* and *Law & Order* (p. 236), Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit* (p. 237), Gothic ur-texts such as *The Castle of Otranto* and *Wuthering Heights* (p. 238), contemporary novels including *The Shining* and *House of Leaves* (p. 238), Charlotte Perkins Gilman's

- "The Yellow Wallpaper" (p. 239), *Scooby Doo* (p. 242), *The Exorcist* (p. 245), *Evil Dead 2* (p. 246), Akira Kurosawa's film *Rashomon* (p. 250), and *The Sopranos* (p. 252).
5. Merry's insistence that there is no "ground zero" or historical "before" the events of the novel reflect ideas put forth in Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), while her anxiety over the interpolation of her memory with audio-visual culture is reminiscent of Jameson's essay, "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" (see Jameson 2000, pp. 201–208).
 6. Hutcheon clarifies: "Postmodernism's distinctive character lies in this kind of wholesale 'nudging' commitment to doubleness, or duplicity ... It must be admitted from the start that this is a strange kind of critique, one bound up, too, with its own *complicity* with power and domination, one that acknowledges that it cannot escape implication in that which it nevertheless still wants to analyze and maybe even undermine" (Hutcheon 1989, p. 1).
 7. While Karen offhandedly compares *The Possession* to the Akira Kurosawa film *Rashomon* (1950) in Chap. 23, the "Rashomon effect" in fact becomes paradigmatic for the whole novel, as "differences [in accounts] arise in combination with the absence of evidence to elevate or disqualify any version of the truth, plus the social pressure for closure on the question" (Anderson 2016, p. 258).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, Robert. 2016. The Rashomon Effect and Communication. *Canadian Journal of Communication* 41: 249–269.
- Barone, Matt. 2012. The 25 Best Horror Novels of the New Millennium. *CompLex*, March 28. <http://www.complex.com/pop-culture/2012/03/the-25-best-horror-novels-of-the-new-millennium/>. Accessed June 27, 2017.
- Baudrillard, Jean. 1981. *Simulacra & Simulation*. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Carroll, Noël. 1990. *The Philosophy of Horror; Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*. New York: Routledge.
- Chess, Shira, and Eric Newsom. 2015. *Folklore, Horror Stories, and the Slender Man*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Creed, Barbara. 1993. From Here to Modernity: Feminism and Postmodernism. In *A Postmodern Reader*, ed. Joseph Natoli and Linda Hutcheon, 398–418. Albany: State University Press.
- Dames, Nicholas. 2012. The Theory Generation. *n+1*, 14. <https://nplusonemag.com/issue-14/reviews/the-theory-generation/>. Accessed June 28, 2017.
- Derry, Charles. 2009. *Dark Dreams 2.0: A Psychological History of the Modern Horror Film from the 1950s to the 21st Century*. Jefferson: McFarland.
- Dzieza, Josh. 2011. Horror Fiction Goes Highbrow in New Novels and Granta. *The Daily Beast*, October 30. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/horror-fiction-goes-highbrow-in-new-novels-and-granta>. Accessed December 18, 2017.
- Eugenides, Jeffrey. 2011. *The Marriage Plot*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Foxe, Steve. 2016. The 21 Best Horror Books of the 21st Century. *Paste*, October 18. <https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2016/10/the-21-best-horror-books-of-the-21st-century.html>. Accessed June 27, 2017.
- Hutcheon, Linda. 1989. *The Politics of Postmodernism*. New York: Routledge.

- Jackson, Kimberly. 2013. *Technology, Monstrosity, and Reproduction in Twenty-First Century Horror*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jameson, Fredric. 2000. *The Jameson Reader*, ed. Michael Hardt and Kathi Weeks. New York: Blackwell.
- Lerner, Ben. 2011. *Leaving the Atocha Station*. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press.
- Morton, Lisa. 2017. HWA in the 21st Century. *Horror Writers Association*, June 4. <http://horror.org/hwa-21st-century/>. Accessed June 26, 2017.
- Nealon, Jeffrey. 2012. *Post-Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Just-in-Time Capitalism*. Stanford: University Press.
- Ryan, Judith. 2012. *The Novel After Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Spector, Nicole Audrey. 2016. Horror Authors Take a Stab at Self-Publishing. *Publishers Weekly*, October 21. <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/authors/pw-select/article/71828-horror-authors-take-a-stab-at-self-publishing.html>. Accessed June 26, 2017.
- Toth, Josh. 2013. Healing Postmodern America: Plasticity and Renewal in Danielewski's *House of Leaves*. *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 54 (2): 181–197.
- Tremblay, Paul. 2015. *A Head Full of Ghosts*. New York: Harper Collins.

INDEX¹

A

- Abbott, Stacey, 302, 308
Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein, 114
 Abbruscato, Joseph, 95, 99
 Abhinavagupta, 25–27
 Abject, 407–418
 Aboriginal, 9, 61–74
 Aboriginalism, 68
 Aborigines, 62, 66, 69
 Abraham, Nicolas, 193, 450
 Acker, Kathy, 377, 378
 Ackroyd, Peter, 349n3, 448
 Acoustics, 457–466
 Adams, Carol J., 262
 Adolescents, 101–110
The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom, 166
Aeneid, 343
 Aeschylus, 113
 Aesthetic/s, 21, 22, 24–30, 30n1, 128, 166, 251, 457, 458, 460–465
 Afghanistan, 328, 334
 Africa, 181, 182, 199, 331, 425, 426, 435
 African American Civil Rights Movement, 294
 African American Literature, 15
 African Americans, 15, 407–418, 423, 424
 slavery, 411
 slaves, 410
 Africans, 37, 181, 415, 424–426, 431, 435
 Afro-Caribbean, 224
 Aftab, Kalem, 474
After Globalisation, 199, 200
Agamemnon, 113
 Age of Enlightenment, 424
 Ahmad, Aalya, 14, 15, 365
 Aickman, Robert, 264
 Aiken, Conrad, 265
 Ajvide Lindqvist, John, 196
 Akkok, Raziye, 287n2
 Alaimo, Stacy, 282, 489
 Alcott, Louisa May, 9
 Aldana Reyes, Xavier, 6, 250, 309, 397, 398, 467n4, 485
 Aldiss, Brian, 303
 Alexie, Sherman, 9, 56, 57
 Alfred, Edgar, 207
 Algeria, 328
Alien, 115, 503
 Alimardanian, Mahnaz, 71
 Allman, Eileen, 128
Almagro and Claude, 157

¹Note: Page numbers followed by ‘n’ refer to notes.

- Almanac of the Dead*, 57
 Almond, Steve, 480
 Althans, Katrin, 61, 64, 65, 68
Amateur Porn Star Killer, 252
The Ambassadors, 467n2
 America, *see* United States (US)
The American Imperial Gothic, 334
 American Indian, 9
American Psycho, 261, 370, 372, 374,
 379–382, 384–385, 387, 387n2,
 392, 469–478, 480, 481n3
 Americans, 45, 46, 49–53, 55, 77–88,
 279, 411–413
American Sniper, 327
 American terrorism, 328
The Amityville Horror, 52, 262, 266
The Amulet, 266
 Andersen, Hans Christian, 91, 93
 Animal horror cinema, 258
*Animal Horror Cinema: Genre, History
 and Criticism*, 258
 Animals, 13, 33, 35, 49, 205, 215,
 216, 257–271, 271n1, 271n4,
 278, 284, 315
 Animal Studies, 258
Anita Blake, 382
Annabelle, 251
 Anolik, Ruth Bienstock, 292
 Anouilh, Jean, 409, 418n4
 Anson, Jay, 52, 262
The Antelope Wife, 56
Antichrist, 281, 284, 286
 Apess, William, 55
Apocalypse Cow, 266
 Appleton, Jay, 275
 Arata, Stephen D., 331
 Archambault, Angela M., 467n9
 Aristotle, 113, 124n3
 Armitt, Lucie, 93
 Armitt, Lucy, 99
 Árnason, Jón, 37, 41n10
 Arnold, Martin, 35
Arthur Mervyn, 317
 Asma, Stephen A., 356, 358
 Asma, Stephen T., 268, 317, 360, 361n2
 Atherton, Gertrude, 78
Atonement, 195
 Aubrey, Frank, 489
 Auerbach, Nina, 212, 216, 383, 387n3
 Auld, Tim, 152n22
 Austen, Jane, 4, 161, 165, 168, 177n1,
 219, 220
 Auster, Paul, 476
 Australia, 9, 15, 65, 328, 437, 438
 Australian, 61–74
*The Autobiography
 of an Ex-Colored Man*, 423
 Autun, Honorius de, 124n4
 Aylward, David, 368
 Ayrton, Michael, 340
 Aytoun, William Edmondstone, 207
- B**
 Bachelard, Gaston, 253, 277
 Backscheider, Paula R., 139
Bad Blood, 423
The Bad Seed, 236, 244, 260
 Badcock, Hendley., 412
 Badley, Linda, 324
 Bahloul, Joëlle, 442
 Bailey, Sara, 114
 Bakhtin, Mikhail, 8, 69
 Balderston, K.C., 392
 Baldick, Chris, 2, 318, 395
 Ballard, J.G., 351n21, 387n1, 441
 Balon, Rebecca, 411, 417
 Bank, L.A., 423
 Banks, Iain, 260
 Bann, Stephen, 304
 Bannet, Eve Tavor, 168
 Barad, Karen, 484
 Barbauld, Anna Laetitia, 156, 394
 Barber, Paul, 206
Bárðar saga, 40n6
 Barker, Clive, 7, 14, 250, 266, 366, 368,
 372, 373, 387n1
 Barker, M., 394
 Barker, Pat, 195
 Barlett, Brendan, 102
 Barone, Matt, 499
 Barrett, H. Clark, 358
 Barry, Peter, 282
 Barthes, Roland, 348, 506
 Basile, Giambattista, 91
 Bassett, P.S., 413
 Bataille, Georges, 378
 Bate, Jonathan, 127, 282

- Baudrillard, Jean, 502
 Baxter, Tara, 481n3
The Bay, 258
 Baynton, Barbara, 64
 Bear, Greg, 307
Bearheart, 54–56
Beauty and the Beast, 91
 Beck, Ulrich, 224
 Beck-Gernsheim, Elisabeth, 224
 Becker, Susanne, 94
 Beckford, William, 330, 331, 334
 Bee, Trisha, 393
The Beetle, 173, 331, 332
 Bell, Alden, 334
 Bell, David, 286
 Bell, Vikki, 388n5
Belle Assemblée, 156
 Bellin de la Liborlière, Louis François Marie, 170
 Belling, Catherine, 323
The Bells (Lewis, L.D.), 140, 146, 148, 149
Beloved, 329, 411, 413, 416, 419n9, 428–430, 441, 442, 451, 452
 Bemong, Nele, 386
Benang, 65
 Benchley, Peter, 269, 282
 Benjamin, Walter, 441, 450
 Bennett, Jane, 494
Benny's Video, 271n8
 Benson, E.F., 267
 Berger, John, 258, 271, 271n1
 Bergland, R.L., 53, 55, 288n7
 Beville, Maria, 184, 476, 479, 481n2
 Bevington, David, 114, 116–118, 123, 125n14, 125n15
Beyond Fantasy Fiction, 306
 Bhabha, Homi, K., 62
 Bharata, Muni, 21, 22, 26–29, 30n1
 Bhayānaka, 8
 Bible, 113, 122, 123
 Bienville, Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, 399
 Bierce, Ambrose, 78, 128, 260, 279, 486
 bin Laden, Osama, 327, 335
 Birch, Dinah, 249
The Birds, 258, 267
Birth of a Nation, 430
 Bishop, Kyle William, 220
 Bittacy, David, 489
 Bixby, Jerome, 260
 Black, Holly, 221
 Black, 330, 411, 415, 430
 Blackmore, Leigh, 251
 Blackwood, Algernon, 249, 277, 278, 282, 489, 490
Black Christmas, 464
Blackfella Bloodsuckas, 72
The Black Forest, 158
Black Hawk Down, 327
 Black motherhood, 410
 Black slaves, 330
The Black Tapes, 466
The Black Valley, 158
The Blair Witch Project, 49, 279–281, 287, 395
 Blake, Linnie, 309
 Blake, Marc, 114
 Blake, William, 287n1
 Blakey, Dorothy, 168
 Blanton, Dennis B., 286
 Blatty, William Peter, 16, 461, 462, 464
 Bloch, Robert, 253, 261, 368, 373, 444, 445, 457, 461, 462, 467n5
The Blood of the Vampire, 331
The Bloody Banquet, 132, 133
The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories, 99
 Bloom, Clive, 2, 393–395
 Bloom, Harold, 136, 400
 Bloomfield, Dennis A., 324
The Bluest Eye, 198
 Blum, Virginia, 234
 Blyton, Enid, 276
 The Boats of the “Glen Carrig,” 489
 Body horror, 489
The Body Snatchers, 335
 Boguet, Henry, 135, 136
 Bolt, David, 291, 292
 Bond, Elson, 224
The Bone Clocks, 351n24
Book of the Dead, 367
Books of Blood, 7, 366, 372
 Boone, Ezekiel, 268
 Boot, Max, 333
 Booth, Michael, 140
 Borges, Jorge Luis, 345
 Borlase, James, 64
 Bornstein, Kate, 388n4
 Borwein, Naomi Simone, 9, 61–74

Botting, Fred, 2, 175, 222, 225, 229,
 305, 329, 336n2, 345, 346,
 350n13, 350n19, 394, 454n4,
 457, 458, 460
 Boucicault, Dion, 139
 Boudreau, Kristin, 416
 Bourdieu, Pierre, 7
 Bowers, Fredson, 128
Bowling for Columbine, 371
 Bowring, Edgar Alfred, 207
The Boy, 251
 Boyd, Brian, 361n1
 Boyden, Joseph, 55, 56
 Boyer, Pascal, 358
 Boyle, Danny, 150
 Braddon, Mary Elizabeth, 404
 Braidotti, Rosi, 222, 494
 Brannon, Robert, 471
 Brantlinger, Patrick, 175, 176, 331
 Bratton, Jacky, 152n19
Breathers, 221–223
 Brent, Linda, 419n10
 Brereton, Joel P., 23, 25
 Brightman, Robert A., 58n6
 Bristow, Joseph, 183
 Brite, Poppy Z., 14, 378, 379, 382–384
 British Empire, 331
 British Imperial Gothic, 328, 331
 Britton, Andrew, 366
 Brockden Brown, Charles, 170, 463
 Brodber, Erna, 435
 Bronson, Charles, 135
 Brontë, Anne, 239
 Brontë, Charlotte, 174, 206, 239, 435
 Brontë, Emily, 174, 175, 239
 Brooke, Rupert, 182, 183, 186–188
 Brooks, Max, 196, 220, 223–225
 Brophy, Philip, 365, 368, 372
 Brown, Brockden, 330
 Brown, Charles Brockden, 16, 51, 317,
 318, 325n8
 Brown, Dan, 438
 Brown, Jennifer, 97
 Browne, S.G., 221, 222, 224
 Bruchac, Joseph, 55
 Bruhm, Steven, 237
 Brummett, Barry, 386
 Buchanan, Daniel P., 58n7
 Buckley, Catherine, 221

Buckley, Matthew, 150n2
 Bugliosi, Vincent, 380
 Bulgakov, Mikhail, 265, 476
The Burden of Being, 55
 Burke, Chesya, 394, 423
 Burke, Edmund, 6, 21, 24, 29, 169, 463
 Burkholder-Mosco, Nicole, 234
 Burns, Sarah, 445
The Butcher Boy, 261
 Butler, Erik, 205, 206
 Butler, Hannah, 227
 Butler, Judith, 378, 388n4, 483
 Butler, Octavia, 214, 215, 423
 Bynum, Leon, 413
 Byron, Lord, 207, 208, 475
 Byronic vampire, 209

C

The Cabin in the Woods, 252, 284
Caleb Williams, 170, 172
 Callus, Ivan, 228
Camilla, 58n1
 Campbell, Joseph, 104
 Campbell, Mel, 67
 Campbell, Norah, 306, 307
 Campbell, Ramsey, 12, 249–254, 368
 Canada, 15, 437, 438
The Candy Meister, 55
 Cañizares-Esguerra, Jorge, 50
 Cannibal, 49, 97, 223, 224, 282
 Cannibalism, 97–99, 113
 Capote, Truman, 234, 380
 Carey, M.R., 223, 226, 227, 334
 Caribbean, 199, 434, 435
 Carlisle, Anthony, 324n5
Carmilla, 173, 211, 331, 434
 Carpenter, John, 115
 Carr, A.A., 55
 Carroll, Jonathan, 263, 267, 268, 270
 Carroll, Joseph, 355, 358–361, 361n1
 Carroll, Noël, 67, 73, 110, 124n2, 181,
 185, 267, 288n5, 378, 503, 504
 Carse, Wendy, 234
 Carter, Angela, 14, 99, 340–344, 347,
 349n6, 350n9, 350n10
 Carter, Kevin, 350n15
 Caruth, Cathy, 451
 Carver, Mrs., 316, 324n5

- Case* 39, 237
Castle, 445, 446
The Castle of Lindenberg, 157
The Castle of Otranto, 166, 167, 392, 395, 398, 423
The Castle of Wolfenbach, 177n1
Cat Out of Hell, 265
Catto, Bonnie, 343
Cavallaro, Dani, 340, 341
Caveney, Graham, 387n2
The Cavern of Horrors, 158
Cazdyn, Eric, 199
Céline, 191, 199
Cell, 307
Censorship, 9
The Ceremonies, 78, 265, 284, 286, 288n6
Ceremony, 54
Cereus Blooms at Night, 435
Chakravorty Spivak, Gayatri, 246n3
Chan, Queenie, 65
Chandler, Marilyn, 79
Chapbooks, 10, 11, 155–162
Charmaz, Kathy, 102
Chatwin, Bruce, 65
Chaudhri, Anna, 92, 93
Chevalier, Jean, 275, 283, 284
Cheyne, Ria, 292
Chikwava, Brian, 437
Child, 15, 107, 108, 233–238, 345, 415, 491
Child-doll relationship, 251
Childhood, 233–235, 237, 238, 245
Child of God, 128
Children, 1, 9, 10, 12, 48, 55, 91, 92, 94, 95, 97–99, 102–104, 110, 233–245, 249, 251, 408, 410, 412
Child's Play, 250, 252, 480
China, 335
Chomsky, Noam, 333, 336n3
Chopin, Kate, 419n10
Chronica Majora, 123
Cillen, Countée, 411, 419n10
City of Glass, 339, 476
Civil War, 424
Clark, Marcus, 64
Clarke, Frances, 467n9
Clarke, Marcus, 64, 66
Clasen, Mathias, 14, 355–361, 361n2
Class, 483
Clayton, Jack, 234–236, 242
Cleary, Sarah, 15, 391
Clermont: A Tale, 177n1
Clery, E.J., 168, 395, 396, 399–401
Clover, Carol J., 133, 278, 280, 281, 378
Club Dead, 214
Coats, Karen, 95
Cobain, Kurt, 465, 466, 468n11
Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome, 221, 225, 277
Cohen, Leonard, 199, 200n3
Cohen, Roger, 472
Cokal, Susann, 465
Colavito, Jason, 404
Colebrook, Claire, 494
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 168, 171, 195, 245, 391, 399, 400
Collier, Eugenia, 429
Collier, John, 267, 283
Collingridge, Peter, 472, 474, 478
Collins, Margo, 224
Colonial, 15, 434–436, 438
Colonialism, 14
Colonization, 9, 15
Columbus, 48
Coma, 318, 321, 323
Compota, Daniel P., 91
Connell, R.W., 388n4
The Conqueror Worm, 4
Conrad, Joseph, 5, 11, 181–189, 193, 199, 328
The Convent of St. Ursula, 161
Cook, Robin, 321, 323, 324
Cooke, Brett, 355
Cooke, Thomas Potter, 141, 210
Coole, Diana, 484, 494
Cooper, Dennis, 377, 378
Cooper, James Fenimore, 51, 79
Cooper, L. Andrew, 395, 396
Copernicus, 129
Coraline, 103
Corbett-Whittier, Connie, 101
Corbusier, Le, 441
The Corsican Brothers, 139
Corsini, Raymond J., 254
Corstorphine, Kevin, 286
Corti, Lillian, 419n10
Coss, Richard G., 358

- Cottrell, Sophie, 348
 Count Dracula, 176
Cows, 266
 Cox, Jeffrey N., 139, 151n5
 Cox, Katharine, 14, 339–349
Crabs, 268
 Craciun, Adriana, 403
 Craft, Nikki, 481n3
 Craven, Wes, 125n13, 134, 372
 Crawford, Joseph, 392, 394
The Creation and Fall of the Angels, 117
 Creed, Barbara, 503, 504
 Creepypasta, 393
 Creophylus, 418n5
Critters, 118
 Crone, Rosalind, 151n8
 Cronin, Justin, 334
 Crookenden, Isaac, 159
Cropsey, 287n3
 Crosby, Sarah L., 287
Crota, 55
 Crow, Charles L., 82
The Curious Tale of Mandogi's Ghost, 197
- D**
 Dacre, Charlotte, 15, 172, 391, 402–404
Daemon (2009), 309
The Demon of Venice, 403
 Dahmer, Jeffrey, 370
 Damasio, Antonio, 433
 Dames, Nicholas, 502, 503, 506
 Daniel, Carolyn, 98
 Danielewski, Mark Z., 14, 16, 340, 341, 343, 345–348, 350n11, 350n18, 351n20, 379, 385, 386, 443, 448, 449, 457–460, 467n3, 500
 Danielpour, Richard, 413
Danse Macabre, 7, 252, 368
 Dante, Joe, 118, 276, 373, 374
The Dark Blue, 211
Darkest Desire, 281, 286
Dark Matter, 263
The Dark Tower, 292
Dark Zero Thirty, 327
 Darwin, Charles, 129, 173, 174, 493, 495
 Datlow, Ellen, 366, 368, 370
 Davidson, Hilda, 92, 93
 Davies, Anne, 454n4
 Davis, Lennard, 395
 Davison, Carol Margaret, 395, 396, 398, 404
 Dawkins, Laura, 413
Dawn of the Dead, 219, 367
 Dawson, Conor, 341
 Day, William Patrick, 283
Day by Day Armageddon, 335
The Day of the Triffids, 257
 de Beaumont, Jean-Marie Leprince, 91
 De Bont, Jan, 6
 De Lisser, H.G., 435
 De Quincey, Thomas, 195
The Dead Can't Dance, 55
Dead Lines, 307
Dead North, 221
Dead of Night, 467n6
Dead Silence, 250
The Dead Zone, 259
 Dear, Nick, 150
 DeGruy, Joy, 429
 Dekker, Thomas, 132
 del Toro, Guillermo, 122
 DeLacey, Joseph, 261
 DeLanda, Manuel, 494
 Deleuze, Gilles, 16, 192, 200n1, 222, 443, 446, 447, 449
 DeLillo, Don, 499
Deliverance, 261, 284
 DeMello, Margo, 271n4
Demon of Venice. A Romance, 158
Demonologist, 438
Demon Seed, 308
 Derdeyn, Andre, 103, 108
 Derrida, Jacques, 222, 502
 Derry, Charles, 504
The Devil's Rejects, 366
The Devil-Tree of El Dorado, 489
 d'Hont, Coco, 14, 15
 Dickens, Charles, 206, 296, 297, 500
 Dickey, James, 261, 284
 Dickinson, Emily, 240
Dies at the End, 500
 Digioia, Amanda, 468n12
 Disabled/disability, 13, 291–298
 Disney, 91, 283
 Doctors, 315, 317, 319–324
 Doig, James, 64, 65, 72

- Dokou, Christina, 15, 407
 Dolar, Mladen, 457, 460, 461, 467n6
 Dolls, 12, 235, 237, 249–254
 “Dolls,” 251
 “The Doll That Does Everything,” 251
The Doll Who Ate His Mother, 252–254
Dolly, 237
 Donovan-Condron, Kellie, 402
Doom, 371
Dorian Gray, 176
 Douglas, Mary, 67
 Douglass, Frederick, 426, 427, 429
 Downey, Dara, 9, 77–88
 Doyle, Arthur Conan, 369, 489
 Dracula, 12, 58n1, 72, 173, 212, 306, 315, 318, 323, 331–333, 335, 358, 359, 382
Drag Me To Hell, 252
 Drake, Nathan, Dr., 156
 Dramas, 113, 116, 127–131, 133, 135–137, 139, 140, 150n2, 150n4
The Drawing of the Three, 292, 293
 Dredge, Stuart, 226
 Drezner, Daniel W., 219
The Driller Killer, 252, 371
Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, 175
 Drobnick, Jim, 486, 491
Drood, 500
 Du Maurier, Daphne, 251, 267, 269, 270
 Dubino, Jeanne, 271n1
 Duchaney, Brian N., 301
The Duchess of Malfi, 127, 134–136
 Due, Tananarive, 423
 Dufrenne, Mikel, 485
Duma Key, 292
 Duncker, Patricia, 350n9
 Dunlop, John, 401
 Dunn, Katharine, 297
 Durkheim, Emile, 67
 Dzieza, Josh, 499
- E**
Earth Abides, 268
 Easton Ellis, Bret, 14
 Eco, Umberto, 349n3
 Ecocritical, 283
 Eco-horror, 257–259, 489
 Ecophobia/ecophobic, 13, 287
 Edelman, Lee, 384
 Edelstein, David, 366
Edgar Huntly, 51
Edmund of the Forest, 156
 Edwards, Jacob, 63
 Edwards, Justin, 462
 Egan, James, 292
 Eickelkamp, Ute, 71
 Eitzen, D. Standley, 383
 Eliade, Mircea, 275, 285
 Eliot, T.S., 11, 130, 136, 181–189
 Elliot, Will, 438
 Ellis, Bret Easton, 16, 261, 370, 377, 379, 380, 392, 393, 469–480, 481n1, 481n3, 500
 Ellis, Elizabeth, 103
 Ellis, Kate Ferguson, 454n2
 Ellison, Harlan, 308, 372
 Ellison, Ralph, 423
 Elmer, Jonathan, 262, 271n9
El Orfanato, 237
 Embry, Karen, 226, 228
 Empire, 13
 Enlightenment, 393, 395, 396
 Enright, Lyle, 16, 499
 Enslaved, 330, 425, 426, 430, 431
 Enslaved Africans, 15
 Enslavement, 425
Enter Night, 438
 Environmental, 283
 Equiano, Olaudah, 425, 426, 429
 Erdrich, Louise, 51, 56
 Erle, Thomas W., 144, 146, 151n14
 Erlingsson, Davíð, 41n11
 Errickson, Will, 271n10
 Estok, Simon C., 12–13, 276, 287
 Eugenides, Jeffrey, 506
Eumenides, 113
 Euripides, 410, 411, 418n3
 Evans, Arthur, 349n1
The Evil Dead (1981), 132, 252
Evil Dead (2013), 276, 279, 287
Evil Dead II, 131
 Evolution, 5
 Evolutionary, 14, 355–361
 Exorcism, 500
The Exorcist, 16, 124n1, 237, 244, 461, 462, 464, 502
Exquisite Corpse, 382
Eyrbyggja saga, 35–37

F

Faber, Michel, 261
 Fairy tales, 10, 91–99, 276, 280, 281
 Fall, Wendy, 12, 205–216
Fangland, 441
 Fanon, Frantz, 328
 Fanu, Sheridan Le, 331
 Faris, Wendy B., 339
 Farnsworth, Christopher, 335
 Farrar, Stephanie, 411, 412
 Fass, Paula, 102
The Fate of Frankenstein, 140
Father Innocent, Abbot of the Capuchins, 157
 Faust, Christa, 374n2
 Fausto-Sterling, Anne, 488
 Favenc, Ernest, 64
 Faxneld, Per, 403
 Feeney, Stephanie, 104
 Felman, Shoshana, 246n2
 Feminist, 404
 Fetterley, Judith, 88
 Fiedler, Leslie, 57n1
 Filarete, Antonio Averlino detto il, 344
 Film, 6, 10
 Filmmaker, 6
 Filmmaking, 6
 Findlay, Alison, 132, 133
 Findlay, Laura, 16, 469
 Finney, Jack, 335
 First World War, 181
 Fisher, Phillip, 489
 Fitzsimmons, Phil, 10, 101–110
 Flanagan, Richard, 195
Fledgling, 214, 215
 Fletcher, E. Willis, 210
 Flick, Uwe, 101
Florence and Giles, 233, 238–245
 Flynn, Gillian, 261
 Foley, Matt, 16, 457, 467n7, 467n8
 Folklore, 1, 8, 91–93, 224
 Forbes, Jack, 49
 Ford, Paul Leicester, 51
 Forests, 275–287
The Forest, 276
The Forest of Hands and Teeth, 280
Fornaldarsögur, 41n7
 Forry, Steven Earl, 143, 151n5
 Forst, Jacob, 211

Foster, Edward, E., 121
 Foucault, Michel, 16, 69, 318, 320, 322, 339, 347, 378, 443, 444
 Foxe, Steve, 499
 Frank, Fred, 155, 162
 Frankenstein, Victor, 317
 Frankenstein, 10, 35, 139, 141–143, 333
Frankenstein (novel), 140, 172, 173, 315, 359, 404, 423, 461, 464
Frankenstein (film, 1931), 141
Frankenstein (film, 2011), 150
Frankenstein (2012), 303, 304
Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus, 170
 Franks, Fredrick S., 391
 Frayling, Christopher, 206
 Frazer, Sir James, 67
 Freccero, Carla, 387n2
 Freeland, Cynthia A., 357
 Freemantle, Edgar, 292
 French Revolution, 396
 Freneau, Philip, 53
 Freud, Sigmund, 12, 47, 67, 68, 129, 135, 197, 234, 250, 283, 284, 344, 385, 407–409, 418n2, 442–444, 450, 452, 502
 Freudian, 12, 16, 234, 236–239, 241, 246n2
 Freund, Karl, 124n1
 Frichot, Hélène, 447
 Friedkin, William, 124n1
Fright Night, 480
 Frost, Samantha, 484, 494
 Fugitive Slave Act, 411
 Funk, Isaac K., 302
 Futurism, 182
 Futurists, 185

G

Gagnier, Regenia, 176
 Gaiman, Neil, 103, 104, 109, 110, 317
 Gaitskill, Mary, 387n1
 Gamble, Sarah, 350n9, 350n12
 Gamer, Michael, 165
 Ganz, Shoshanna, 282
Gardens in the Dunes, 54
 Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie, 292–295, 297

- Garner, Margaret, 411, 413, 428–430
 Gates, Raymond, 63, 64, 72, 73
Geek Love, 297
 Gein, Ed, 471
 Gelder, Ken, 7, 66, 68, 208, 304, 307, 433
 Gender/gendered, 79–81, 87, 169, 172, 174, 251, 293, 294, 339–341, 378, 379, 382–384, 387, 434, 486, 488
The General in his Labyrinth, 339
 Genet, Jean, 199, 200n3
 Genette, Gérard, 110
 Gentry, Curt, 380
 Georgieva, Margarita, 246n1
 Gerald, Vizenor, 56
Gerald's Game, 378
 Gere, Cathy, 349n1
 Germaine Buckley, Chloé, 12
Get Out, 424
 Geyser, Morgan, 393
 Gheerbrant, Alain, 275, 283, 284
 Ghosh, Manmohan, 26
 Ghost, 36, 37, 39, 41n10, 52, 55, 57, 64, 65, 68, 84–87, 119, 131, 207, 235, 237–239, 242, 313–314, 322, 385, 415, 436, 437
Ghostbusters, 118
 Ghosts, 27, 33, 36, 46, 47, 51, 54, 64, 67, 68, 135, 166, 173, 197, 234, 235, 239, 244, 245, 278, 385, 395, 444, 451
Ghost Singer, 55
Ghost Story, 78, 84, 85
 Gibbon, Edward, 336
 Gibbons, Alison, 345, 350n16, 350n17
 Gibbs, Alan, 346
 Gilbert, Sandra, 246n3
 Gilbert, Sarah, 324n4
 Gilbert, Stephen, 263
Gilgamesh, 276
The Girl Next Door, 357, 358
The Girl that Loved Tom Gordon, 286
The Girl with All the Gifts, 221, 223, 226, 228, 229, 334
Gísla saga Súrssonar, 38
 Gittins, Diana, 383, 388n5
Glamorama, 473
 Global, 191–200
 Globalization, 11, 192, 199, 200
 Gnoli, Domenico, 30
 Godwin, William, 170
 Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 207
 Goingback, Owl, 55
 Goldberg, Carey, 371
 Golden, Christopher S., 366, 368
 Goldman, William, 251
 Goldthwaite, R.O., 358
 Golledge, Reginald G., 280
 Gonzalez, J.F., 366
The Good Son, 237
Goosebumps, 104
 Gothic, 2–4, 10–13, 15
 Gothic-postmodernism, 479
Gothic Stories, 156, 157
Gothika, 125n12
 Gottschall, Jonathan, 359, 361n1
 Grahame-Smith, Seth, 219, 220
 Graves, Robert, 418n1
Great Expectations, 296, 297
The Great Gabbo, 250
The Great God Pan, 277, 281, 315, 490
 Greenblatt, Stephen, 129
 Greenhall, Ken, 263
 Gregersdotter, Katarina, 258, 270
 Gregory, Alan, 13, 291, 296
 Gregory, Matthew, 463
 Gregory, Sinda, 385
Gremlins, 118
The Grey, 258
Grimm, 91, 281
 Grimms, Brothers, 91–93, 95, 96, 98
Grizzly, 258
 Grodal, Torben Kragh, 356, 358, 359, 361n2
 Grosse, Carl, 177n1
 Grosz, Elizabeth, 441, 442, 484, 488
 Grow, Kory, 474
 Gruss, Susanne, 340, 341
 Guattari, Félix, 192, 200n1, 222
 Gubar, Susan, 324n4
Guilty Pleasures, 382
 Gumbrecht, Hans, 485
The Gunslinger, 292
 Guðjónsson, Þórður Ingi, 36
Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself, 425

H

- Halberstam, Judith (Halberstam, Jack), 67, 304, 378, 388n4, 483
- Haley, Alex, 430
- Hall, Alice, 296
- Halldórsson, Jóhannes, 37
- Hållen, Nicklas, 258, 270
- Halloween*, 132
- Hamel, The Obeah Man*, 434
- Hamilton, Laurell K., 382
- Hamilton, Nathalie, 386
- Hamlet*, 166, 472
- Han, Byung-Chul, 436
- Hancock, Danielle, 468n12
- Hand, Elizabeth, 78
- Hand, Richard J., 149, 152n20, 152n21
- Handlyng Synne*, 119
- Haneke, Michael, 271n8
- Hanich, Julian, 486
- Hannibal*, 266, 295
- Hansel and Gretel*, 281
- Hans Holbein the Younger, 467n2
- Hantke, Steffen, 336n1
- The Happening*, 257
- Harare North*, 437
- Haraway, Donna, 227, 228
- Hardar saga*, 36
- Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, 194
- Harding, John, 233, 238–242, 245
- Hardt, Michael, 332
- Hardy, Thomas, 183, 186
- Harper, Frances Ellen Watkins, 411–413, 418–419n8, 419n9
- Harris, Charlaïne, 51, 214, 382
- Harris, Eric, 371
- Harris, Paul, 449
- Harris, Thomas, 262, 266, 295, 380
- Harris, Trudier, 415
- Harrison, Robert Pogue, 275, 277, 279, 284
- The Harrowing of Hell*, 117
- Harry Potter*, 103, 276
- Harvest Home*, 78, 251
- Harvey, David, 333, 336n3
- Hashaw, Tim, 424
- The Hatching*, 268
- Haunted*, 373
- Haunted houses, 379, 384–387, 428, 444
- The Haunting*, 6
- The Haunting of Hill House*, 6, 149, 150, 357, 385, 445
- Hawksmoor*, 339, 340, 448
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel, 52, 279–281, 315, 321, 454n5, 475
- Hawthorne, William, 330
- Hay, David, 104
- Hayles, N. Katherine, 345, 351n20, 385
- Hayman, Richard, 275, 281, 285, 287n1
- A Head Full of Ghosts*, 16, 356, 500–504, 506, 507
- Heart of Darkness*, 5, 181, 182, 189, 199, 328
- Hebdige, Dick, 375n3
- Heise-von der Lippe, Anya, 12, 219–230
- Helene, Talie, 65
- Hell Hound*, 263
- Hell House*, 265
- The Hellstrom*, 267
- Helter Skelter*, 380
- Helyer, Ruth, 470, 481n2
- Hendler, Glenn, 412
- Heng, Geraldine, 123
- Henley, W.E., 176
- Henry, Patrick, 424
- Henson, Jim, 122
- Herbert, James, 250, 268, 281
- Herbrechter, Stefan, 228
- Herek, Stephen, 118
- The Hero*, 170
- Herr, Curt, 210
- Heterotopia, 443–446, 453, 454n4
- Hichri, Asma, 414, 415
- Hiers, Richard, 285
- High-Rise*, 441
- Highsmith, Patricia, 260
- Hill, Patricia Liggins, 418
- Hill, Susan, 149, 237, 263
- The Hill of Dreams*, 489
- Hillis Miller, J., 339
- Hills, Matthew, 370
- The Hills Have Eyes*, 372
- Hindu, 437
- Hitchcock, Alfred, 146, 269, 369, 461
- Hitchen, Robert, 267
- Hobo with a Shotgun*, 252

Hobson, John, 330
Hodge, Brian, 367
Hodgson, William Hope, 266, 486, 489
Hoeverler, Diane Long, 139, 142, 150n2
Hoffmann, E.T.A., 12, 250, 251
Hoffmann, Nina Kiriki, 367
Hogan, Linda, 56
Hogle, Jerrold E., 361
Höglund, Johan, 13, 327
Holden, Lyle Wilson, 489
Holmes, Dave, 408, 409
Holmes, Odetta, 292
Home Recording of Copyrighted Works, 309
Homer, 46, 199
Homes, A.M., 387n1
Honour, Hugu, 396
hooks, bell, 388n4
Hooper, Tobe, 372
Hope, William, 266
Horrid Mysteries, 177n1
Horror and Damnation in Medieval Literature, 10
Horror films, 3
Horrors of the Black Museum, 135
The Horrors of Oakendale Abbey, 316
The Horrors of the Secluded Castle, 158
Hostel, 366
House, Elizabeth B., 417
House of Leaves, 16, 339, 344, 345, 349, 379, 385–387, 443, 448, 453, 458–460, 500, 507
The House Next Door, 263
The House of Seven Gables, 454n5
House of Small Shadows, 295, 296
House of Wax, 135
Housman, Clemence, 173
Houston, Penelope, 235
Howarth, Peter, 183
Hrólfs saga kraka, 35
Hudson, Dale, 57n1
Hughes, William, 286, 315, 329
Hugo, Victor, 292
Hume, Kathryn, 41n8, 67
The Hunger Games, 103, 276
The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea, 409
Hunt, Peter, 95, 122
Hunter, John, 317

Hurley, Kelly, 250, 487, 493, 494
Hutcheon, Linda, 475, 476, 503
Hutchings, Peter, 278, 369
Hutson, Shaun, 268
Huxley, T.H., 109, 194, 493
Huyssen, Andreas, 304

I
I am Legend (1954), 221, 318
I Am Legend (1995), 263, 268, 306, 333, 360
I Spit on Your Grave, 252
Iceland, 37–39, 40n3, 40n5, 40–41n7, 41n13, 41n16
Icelandic, 34, 36–39
The Iliad, 67
Imaginative, 47
Imperial, 13, 327–332, 334, 336
Imperial Gothic, 328, 331, 332, 334, 335
Imperial Horror, 328, 332–336
Imperialism, 13, 181, 328–332, 334
Imperialist, 336
In a Glass Darkly, 211
In Cold Blood, 380
India, 15, 437
Indian aesthetics, 21–30
Indian ghost, 436, 437
Indian Killer, 56
Indians, 9, 21, 23–25, 28, 45–57, 58n2, 437
Indigenous, 9, 45–52, 54–56, 61–65, 67–73, 330
Indighorror, 9, 62, 63, 65, 67, 72, 73
The Innocents, 234–237, 239–242
The Inquisitor's Wife, 423
The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, 425
Interview with the Vampire, 213, 382
Into the Woods, 276
Invisible Man, 423
Iraq, 328, 334
Irving, Washington, 52, 79
Ishiguro, Kazuo, 192
Islam, 334
Islamic, 334
The Island of Doctor Moreau, 259, 304, 315, 434

Íslendingasögur, 41n7
It (1987), 423
The Italian, 169, 403, 463, 464

J

Jackson, Glenda, 104
 Jackson, Shirley, 6, 149, 150, 250, 265,
 357, 385, 443, 445, 446
 Jacobs, Edward H., 172
 Jacobs, Harriet, 427–429
 Jacobs, W.W., 267
Jacob's Ladder, 125n12
 Jacobean, 10
 Jakobsson, Ármann, 8, 9, 33, 35, 36,
 40n4, 41n14
 James, Henry, 12, 150, 233–236, 238,
 241, 243, 245
 James, M.R., 6, 242, 243, 268
James Miranda Barry, 339
 Jameson, Fredric, 226, 502
 Jamison, Stephanie W., 23, 25
 Jancovich, Mark, 370, 378
Jane Eyre, 174, 246n3, 315, 435
 Japan, 331
Jaws, 257, 258, 267, 282
 Jefferson, Thomas, 430
 Jentsch, Ernst, 254
 Jervis, John, 253
The Jew of Malta, 136
 Jewett, Sarah Orne, 9, 78, 82, 83
 Johnson, Adam, 194
 Johnson, Chalmers, 333, 336n3
 Johnson, James Weldon, 423
 Johnson, Lynn Staley, 125n7
 Johnson, Rochelle L., 486
 Johnson, Wendy Dasler, 419n9
 Jones, David J., 150n1
 Jones, E.A., 119
 Jones, Jacqueline, 411
 Jones, Terry, 122
 Jónsson, Finnur, 34
 Jónsson, Guðni, 38, 39
Jordskott, 285
 Joseph, Michael, 265
 Joshi, S.T., 5, 270, 366, 368
The Joss: A Reversion, 331
 Jowett, Lorna, 302, 308
 Joyce, James, 349n2

Judith, Fryer, 88n5
Jug Face, 284, 286
 Jung, Carl Gustav, 418n1

K

The Kadaitchi Sung, 69
 Kafka, Franz, 192, 349n2, 369, 372
Kafka on the Shore, 351n24
 Kahlert, Karl Friedrich, 177n1
 Kalogridis, Jeanne, 423
 Kant, Immanuel, 21, 24, 29
 Karpinsky, Eva C., 341
 Kassovitz, Mathieu, 125n12
 Katherine of Alexandria, 114–116
 Kauffman, Linda, 370
 Kawin, Bruce W., 269
 Keats, John, 186
 Kelly, Tim, 211
 Kelsey, Jennifer C., 391, 404
 Kerr, Deborah, 236
 Kersh, Gerald, 251
 Ketchum, Jack, 14, 263, 284, 357, 358,
 366, 372
 Khair, Tabish, 15, 433, 437
 Kiernan, Caitlín R., 374n2
 Kilgour, Peter, 102
The Killer Inside Me, 380
 Kilpatrick, Nancy, 373
 Kincaid, Jamaica, 193
 Kincaid, James, 194, 235, 236
 King, Robert, 356, 361n2
 King, Stephen, 7, 9, 11, 52, 53, 78,
 81–84, 86, 87, 109, 125n12,
 128, 149, 237, 250, 252, 253,
 259, 263–265, 268, 279, 286,
 292–294, 307, 333, 356–361,
 368, 378, 423, 474
 Kipling, Rudyard, 267
 Kirby, Kathleen, 79
 Kirkman, Robert, 135
Kjalnesinga saga, 36, 37
 Kjeldgaard-Christiansen, Jens, 358
 Klebold, Dylan, 371
 Klein, T.E.D., 78, 265, 284
 Knox, Robert, 317
 Koger, Grove, 385
 Koja, Kathe, 374n2
 Kolodny, Annette, 79

Koontz, Dean, 128, 264, 308, 335, 378
 Kral, Françoise, 68
 Kremmel, Laura R., 13, 313
 Kristeva, Julia, 11, 15, 71, 191,
 193–199, 222, 340, 349, 368, 407,
 408, 413–415, 417, 418, 450, 452
 Kristjánsson, Jónas, 34
 Kubrick, Stanley, 52, 125n12
 Kurtzman, Alex, 124n1
 Kyd, Thomas, 10, 131

L

L' Uomo vegetale (The Vegetable Man),
 489
 Labyrinth, 14, 16, 122, 339–349
 Lacan, Jacques, 191, 460, 461, 467n2
Lady's Monthly Museum, 156
The Lady's Tragedy, 132
 Lamb, Charles, 243
Land of the Dead, 220
 Landscapes, 77–88, 275–277, 279, 280,
 282–287
The Langoliers, 292
 Lanphar, Edie, 104
 Lansdale, Joe R., 14, 366–368, 372
 Lanzen-Harris, Laurie, 398
 Larbalestier, Justine, 221
 Larsen, Nella, 423
The Last Man, 317, 318
The Last of the Mohicans, 52
The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative of
 1757, 425
The Last Winter, 257
 Lathom, Francis, 177n1
 Latour, Bruno, 301, 487
 Lauro, Sarah Juliet, 226, 228
 Lawlor, Robert, 62, 70
 Lawrence, David, 417
 Lawson, Henry, 64
 Laymon, Richard, 284, 366
 Le Fanu, J.S., 58n1, 173, 174, 211, 242,
 267, 434
Leaving the Atocha Station, 506
 Ledoux, Ellen, 3
 Lee, Edward, 366
 Lee, Malcolm D., 124n5
 Leech, Clifford, 130, 131, 135
 Lefebvre, Henri, 454n1

Lehane, Dennis, 125n12
 Leiber, Fritz, 78
 Lemoine, Ann, 158
 Lenkiewicz, Rebecca, 150
 Lerner, Ben, 506
Less Than Zero, 473
Let the Right One In, 150, 196
Let's Play White, 423
 Leutner, Payton, 393
 Levin, Ira, 319, 320
 Levinas, Emmanuel, 436
 Levy, Andrea, 193
 Lewes, George Henry, 174
 Lewis, Leopold Davis, 146–148
 Lewis, Matthew, 15, 157, 168, 171,
 172, 239, 321–323, 350n13,
 391, 396–403, 427, 463,
 486, 487
 Lewis, Pericles, 185, 187–189
 Lewis, R.W.B., 88n3
Life of a Slave Girl, 427
 Liggins, Emma, 321
 Ligotti, Thomas, 357
 Lindow, John, 38, 40n2
 Lindquist, Sven, 436
 Lindqvist, John Ajvide, 150
Little Otik, 283
Little Shop of Horrors, 118, 283
The Living and the Dead, 238
 Lloyd-Smith, Allan, 423
 Lockwood, J. Samaine, 88n9
 Logan, Michael, 266
 London, Jack, 317
 London Magazine, 156
The Lonely Doll, 251
Lone Survivor, 327
Long Distance Call, 306, 307
 Long, Frank Belknap, 264
 Longman, 296
 Longmore, Paul K., 295, 296
 Lorna, Hamilton, 101
Lost Souls, 379, 382–385, 387
 Loudon, Jane Webb, 173
Love and Death in the American
 Novel, 57n1
 Lovecraft, H.P., 4, 5, 14, 62, 66, 80–82,
 124n1, 128, 188, 249, 265, 268,
 301, 315, 356, 357, 467n5, 486
A Lover's Discourse, 506

Luckhurst, Roger, 219, 222, 224,
271n3, 454n8
Lucretius, 495
Lukács, György, 69
Lunar Park, 16, 469–478, 480, 500
Lydgate, John, 124n6
Lyne, Adrian, 125n12

M

Maberry, Jonathan, 335
Macbeth, 159, 166
Macdonald, D.L., 172, 173, 401
MacDonald, Philip, 267
Machen, Arthur, 265, 266, 270, 277,
281, 315, 321, 484, 489–495
Machiavelli, 129
Machinery, 301
Machines, 301–311
Mackenzie, Anne, 101
Maclean, Charles, 259
Magic (1975), 251
Magical realism, 436
The Magic Cottage, 281
The Magic Island, 225
Mahawatte, Royce, 315
Maiden, Thomas, 158
Maitland, Sara, 276
Malchow, H.L., 434
Mallatratt, Stephen, 149
Malt, Barbara, 105
Mandeville's Travels, 123, 129
Mandingo, 430
Mannying de Brun, Robert, 119–121,
125n8
Manson, Marilyn, 371
Mantz, Jeffrey W., 225, 226
Mappa Mundi (Hereford), 123
March, William, 260
Margaret Garner, 413
Margaret of Antioch, 114
Margherita, Gayle, 125n7
Marinetti, F.T., 182, 183
Marion, Isaac, 221, 223, 227
Marks, Isaac M., 357
Marks, John, 441
Marks, Kathleen, 415, 418
The Marriage Plot, 506
Marryat, Florence, 331

Marsh, Richard, 173, 331, 332, 486
Martha Peake, 295, 296
Martin, Billy (Poppy Z. Brite), 366,
374n2
Martin, John, 104
Martin, Theodore, 207
Martin, Valerie, 441
Marty Young, 61, 63
*The Marvellous Magazine and
Compendium of Prodigies*, 157
Marx, Groucho, 129
Masculinities, 388n4
Massumi, Brian, 372
The Master and Margarita, 265, 476
Masterson, Graham, 266
Matheson, Neil, 306
Matheson, Richard, 221, 263, 265, 268,
306, 307, 318, 333, 360
Matheson, William Richard, 251
Mathias, T.J., 166, 350n13, 399
Matthews, W.H., 349n5
Maturin, Charles, 58n1, 176, 457, 458,
463, 467n8
Maupassant, Guy de, 264
Maurer, 41n10
Mayer, David, 147, 148, 152n18
Maynard's House, 78
Mayo, Robert, 156, 391
Mays, Sas, 306
Mbembe, Achille, 222
McCabe, Janet, 408, 409
McCabe, Patrick, 261
McCaffery, Larry, 385
McCarthy, Cormac, 128
McCarthy, Tom, 195, 200n2
McCarty, John, 365
McLeod, J., 105
McDermott, Emily, 418n3
McDonald, Rick, 276
McDowell, Michael, 266
McEvoy, E., 68
McEwan, Ian, 195
McGann, Jerome, 186
McGeary, Duncan, 266
McGrath, Alister, 285, 286
McGrath, Patrick, 295, 296
McGurl, Mark, 220
McHale, Brian, 471, 476–478
McKinney, Devin, 306

- McLaren, Phillip, 72, 73
 McNeill, Kirsty, 199
Meat, 261
 Mecum, Ryan, 220
 Medea, 15, 407–418
Médée, 409
 Medical, 13, 313–324, 395
 “Medical thriller,” 318
 Medicine, 314, 320, 323, 324
 Medieval, 33–40, 40n3, 40n5, 40n7, 41n13, 113–124
 Melancholy, 443, 450–453
 Melbye, David, 283
Melmoth the Wanderer, 58n1, 176, 457, 463
 Melville, Herman, 475
 Merchant, Carolyn, 286
 Merrell, James H., 50
Metamorphoses, 132
 Meyers, Chris, 495n1
 Middle Ages, 33, 34
 Middle East/Middle Eastern, 328, 331, 333, 335
 Middleton, Thomas, 10, 130, 132
The Midnight Assassin, 159
The Midnight Bell, 177n1
The Midnight Embrace in the Halls of Werdendorff, 160
The Midnight Groan, 158
A Midsummer Night’s Dream, 275
 Mieszkowski, Sylvia, 460, 467n7
 Miles, Robert, 395, 396, 399–401
 Millington, Gareth, 452
 Mills, Robert, 394
 Mills, Sandra, 12, 249–254
 Milne, A.A., 276
 Milton, John, 3, 184, 185, 199, 438
 Mineka, Susan, 357
 Mirk, John, 116
Misery, 83, 292
The Mist, 268
 Mitchell, David T., 297, 351n24, 448
 Mitchell, Keith, 135, 415
 Modernism, 11, 181–189
 Modernists, 181, 182, 184, 185, 187–189
 Modernity, 11
 Mogen, David, 330
 Moglen, Helene, 415, 416
 Mol, Hans, 62, 66, 67, 71
 Moltmann, Jürgen, 285
 Money, Nicholas P., 227
 Monier-Williams, M., 22
The Monk, 15, 157, 159, 171, 172, 321, 350n13, 391, 392, 396–403, 427, 463, 486
Monkey Beach, 54–55
 Monnet, Agnieszka Soltysik, 336n1
 Montaigne, Michel de, 129
 Monteleone, Elizabeth, 368
 Monteleone, Thomas F., 368
Monthly Cabinet, 156, 157
Monthly Visitor, 156
 Moody, Jane, 150n3
 Moore, Michael, 371
 Mootoo, Shani, 435
 Moraga, Cherrie, 409
 Moravcik, Eva, 104
 Moreno-Garcia, Silvia, 221
 Morgan, Sally J., 279
 Morrell, David, 264
 Morrison, Toni, 198, 292, 329, 411, 413–418, 419n9, 428–430, 441, 442, 451, 452
Mortal Love, 78
 Morton, Samuel, 52
 Morton, Timothy, 283
 Moslund, Sten Pultz, 485, 486
Motel Hell, 261
Mother Goose, 91
 Mothers, 407–418
Mr Jones, 284
 Mr. Burke, 4
Mr. Potter, 193
Mrs Dalloway, 188
 Mudrooroo (Colin Johnson), 65, 68, 69, 73, 328
 Mukherjee, Neel, 437
 Müller, F. Max, 24, 25
 Mulvey-Roberts, Marie, 68
The Mummy, 124n1
The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century, 173
 Murakami, Haruki, 194, 351n24, 448
 Murphy, Bernice M., 13, 257
Musen Almanach, 207
 Musgrave, Agnes, 156
 Musharbash, Yasmine, 67, 71, 73

Muslims, 36
 Muzzatti, Stephen L., 371
Myal, 435
 Myrone, Martin, 393, 394
My Soul to Keep, 423
The Mysteries of London, 175
The Mysteries of Udolpho, 169–171, 403
The Mysterious Bride, 158
The Mysterious Murder, 159
The Mysterious Warning, a German Tale, 177n1
The Mystery of Dr. Fu-Manchu, 331
 Mythology, 1, 8

N

The Name of the Rose, 339, 340
Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, 426
The Narrow Road to the Deep North, 195
 Nash, Roderick Frazier, 280, 285
 Natale, Simone, 306
 Native, 9, 45, 47–50, 52–57, 58n2, 58n7
 Native American, 45, 49, 53, 54, 58n11, 279, 330
 Native American Indian, 9, 45–57
 Native traditions, 9
 Nature, 12
 Navarette, Susan J., 493
 Nāyaka, Bhaṭṭa, 30
 Neale, Stephen, 254
The Necromancer, 177n1
 Negri, Antonio, 332
 Neill, Natalie, 11, 165–176
 Neilson, Anthony, 150
 Nesse, Randolph M., 357
 Neumann, Erich, 79
Never Let Me, 192
 Nevill, Adam, 295–297
 Neville, Rachel, 500
 Nevins, Jess, 267
New Gleaner, or Entertainment for the Fire-Side, 156
 New Materialism, 16, 483–495
 Newman, Kim, 370, 371
 Ng, Andrew Hock Soon, 16, 441
 Ng, Clarence, 102
 Nicholls, Christine Judith, 66
 Nicholson, G., 156

Nieme, Loren, 103
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 5, 129–131
 Nigeria, 425
The Night of the Lepus, 258
Night of the Living Dead, 7, 221, 252
Nightmare Abbey, 168
Nightmare on Elm Street, 125n13, 370
The Night Wanderer, 55
Nightwing, 55
 Nikolajeva, Maria, 103
 9/11, 328, 333–335
 Nixon, Nicola, 382
Njáls saga, 36
 Noble, Thomas Satterwhite, 418n7
No Easy Day, 327
 Norse mythology, 8, 34, 36, 40n2, 40n3
Northanger Abbey, 4, 161, 165
 Northrup, George T., 48
 Norton, Rictor, 399
Notre-Dame de Paris, 292
The Novel After Theory, 501
 Novik, Naomi, 278, 282
 N-Town, 114, 117, 123, 125n15
 Nye, Rebecca, 104

O

O'Brien, C.C., 412
 O'Kelly, Michael J., 58n10
 O'Malley, Patrick, 391
 Oates, Joyce Carol, 251, 370
The Ocean at the End of the Lane, 317
 Ochse, Weston, 327, 336
Odd Hours, 335
Odyssey, 46
 Oedipus, 113
Off Season, 372
 Öhman, Arne, 357
 Ólason, Vésteinn, 34
The Old English Baron, 167, 425
 Olney, Ian, 220
 Olson, Daniel, 92
The Omen, 237
 On the Supernatural in Poetry, 3
Once Upon a Time, 91
The Opposite House, 192, 193
 Oral storytelling, 8
 Oral traditions, 10
Oresteia, 113

Orientalism, 330
The Orphan, 237
The Orphan Master's Son, 194
The Orphan of the Rhine, 177n1
Örvar-Odds saga, 38, 39
 Orwell, George, 194
Othello, 129, 132
The Other, 260
Otranto, 166, 175
 Otten, Terry, 411, 415
 Ottley, Matt, 103
Our Lady of Darkness, 78
Our Vampires, Ourselves, 216
Outer Dark, 128
 Ovid, 132
 Owen, Lauren, 321
 Owen, Louis, 55
 Owen, Wilfred, 11, 184–188
 Owens, Stephanie A., 359
 Oyeyemi, Helen, 192, 193, 196
 Oz, Frank, 118

P
 Paffenroth, Kim, 229
 Pain, Barry, 266
 Paine, Thomas, 424
 Painter, Claire, 104
 Palahniuk, Chuck, 373, 387n1
 Pålsson, Heimir, 40n1
 Pandey, Chunky, 27
Pan's Labyrinth, 122
Paradise Lost, 438
 Paris, Scott, 104
 Park, Alex, 324
 Parker, Arthur Caswell, 53
 Parker, Elizabeth, 13, 275
 Parks, Rosa, 293, 294
 Parreaux, Andre, 398, 399
 Parsons, Eliza, 177n1
Parva, 28
The Passage, 334
Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician, 316
 Passey, Joan, 467n9
Passing (1929), 423
Passing Time, 339
The Passion, 339, 340
The Passion of New Eve, 339–342, 349

Passion Play I, 125n15
Passion Play II, 117
Patient Zero, 335
 Patrick, F.C., 168
 Patterson, Orlando, 425
 Paul, William, 237
 Paulson, Ronald, 396
 Paver, Michelle, 263
 Payne Fund Studies, 392
 Peacock, Thomas Love, 168, 173
 Peake, Richard Brinsley, 140–143
 Pearson, Jacqueline, 171
 Peattie, Elia A., 263
 Peaty, Gwyneth, 13, 301
 Peck, Louis, 402
 Peckham, John, 119
 Peele, Jordan, 424
Peeping Tom, 132
 Peeren, Esther, 481n2
 Penn, William, 50
 Penny dreadfuls, 392
 Pensky, Max, 443, 450–452
Perfume: The Story of a Murderer, 197, 465
 Perrault, Charles, 91, 94, 95, 98
 Perrello, Tony, 10, 127–137
 Person, Leland, 411
The Pervert's Guide to Cinema, 461
 Peterson, Christopher, 416
 Petley, J., 394
Pet Sematary, 52, 53, 237, 263, 265
Phaedo, 46
Phase IV, 268
 Philips, Sandra, 65
A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, 6
 Physician, 314
 Piatti-Farnell, Lorna, 10, 91, 306
 Picasso, Pablo, 349n2
The Picture of Dorian Gray, 173, 176, 488
The Pilo Family Circus, 438
 Pinedo, Isabel Cristina, 365
 Pinker, Steven, 49
 Pitt, George Dibdin, 143–145, 151n9, 151n16
Plains of Promise, 70
 Planché, J.R., 143, 151n15

Plato, 46, 491
 Plays, 114, 116–118, 125n14
The Pleasures of Horror, 370
 Pliny, 129
 Plummer, John, 210
 Plumwood, Val, 277
 Poe, Edgar Allan, 1, 4, 62, 66, 128, 135, 188, 240, 259, 264, 265, 267, 317, 330, 385, 441, 454n5, 464, 475, 486, 487, 489, 494
The Poetics, 113
 Polanski, Roman, 115, 319
 Polatkin, Marie, 56
 Polidori, John, 173, 208, 209
The Politics of Postmodernism, 503
 Pollock, Sheldon, 26
Poltergeist, 52
 Pope, Alexander, 344
 Þórðarson, Matthías, 35, 36, 41n9
 Þórólfsson, Björn Karel, 38
 Porteous, Alexander, 281
 Porter, Katherine Anne, 200
 Porter, Joy, 9, 45–57, 58n2
 Postcolonial/postcolonialism, 5, 15, 62, 194, 433–438
 Posthuman, 12
 Postmodern/postmodernism, 14, 16, 129, 339–349, 377, 469–481, 500–504, 506
 Postmodernist, 477, 479
 Post-9/11, 328, 366
Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome, 429
 Potter, Franz J., 10, 11, 155
 Pound, Ezra, 185, 187
 Power, Andrew J., 10, 113–124
 Praed, Rosa, 64
 Pratt, Mary Louise, 54, 59n11
The President's Vampire, 335
 Pressman, Jessica, 385
 Prest, Thomas Peckett, 173, 175
 Presterudstuen, Geir, 67, 73
Presumption, 140
Pride and Prejudice and Zombies, 220
 Priestley, Chris, 12, 233, 242–245, 246n4
The Priory of St. Clair, 162
Property (2003), 441
 Proposch, Steve, 65
 Propp, Valdimir, 93

Proude Cedarfair, 55
Psycho, 146, 253, 261, 444, 457, 461, 462, 464
 Psychoanalytic, 14
 Pub yok, 194
 Punter, David, 11, 191–200, 235, 292, 320, 434, 462
 Putnam, Amanda, 415
 Pyper, Andrew, 438

Q

The Quick, 321

R

Rabelais and His World, 8
 Race, 228, 294, 423–431, 483
 Racial, 193
 Radcliffe, Ann, 2–4, 6, 79, 140, 150n4, 155, 166, 168–171, 174, 184, 185, 239, 316, 350n13, 394, 441, 463, 464, 467n8
 Rafn, C.C., 39
 Rardin, Jennifer, 335
Ratman's Notebooks, 263
The Rats, 268
 Raucher, Herman, 78
Rawblood, 313
 Ray, Larry, 97
 Raynaud, Claudine, 415, 416
 Reagan, Alex, 466
 Reagan, Ronald, 366
 Reames, Sherry, L., 115, 116, 124n6, 125n7
The Reaper are the Angels, 334
The Return of the Vanishing American, 57n1
Red, 263
Red Dragon, 295
Red Riding Hood, 281
 Reeve, Clara, 2, 167, 169, 171
 Regan, Tom, 260
 Reitman, Ivan, 118
 Religion, 1
Reliques of Genius, 156–157
The Revenger's Tragedy, 127, 130, 135, 136
 Revenge tragedians, 133

Revenge tragedies, 128, 129, 134, 136
 Reyes, Xavier Aldana, 250, 252, 258,
 291, 321, 323, 362n3
 Reynolds, G.W.M., 173, 175
Rhymes for Young Ghouls, 55
 Rhys, Jean, 435, 436
 Rice, Anne, 213, 214, 250, 382
 Rice, Jane, 260
 Richard, Slotkin, 88n1
 Richard Whiteheart Beads, 56
Rigveda, 22, 23
 Rindisbacher, Hans J., 486, 492
 Ringel, Faye, 88n7
Rise of the Planet of the Apes, 258
The Road, 128, 133
 Robe, Stanley L., 48
 Robertson, Elizabeth, 125n7
 Robinson, Eden, 54, 55
 Robinson, James, 143
 Robinson, Mary, 168
 Robinson, Phil, 489
 Roche, Regina Maria, 177n1
 Rogin, Michael, 279
 Rohmer, Sax, 331
The Romance of the Forest, 169, 425
Romances and Gothic Tales, 159
 Romantic, 166, 168, 170, 172,
 173, 175, 176, 243, 245, 316,
 320–322, 475
 Romantic-era texts, 316
 Romanticism, 235, 475, 476
 Romantics, 185
Romeo and Juliet, 132
 Romero, George A., 7, 219–221,
 366, 367
Roots, 430
 Rose, Jacqueline, 103
Rosemary's Baby, 115, 319, 321–323
 Rosenberg, Isaac, 188
 Rosenblatt, Roger, 472
 Rothstein, Mervyn, 429
 Rowe, Michael, 438
 Rowlandson, Mary, 50, 51
Rule of Darknes, 330
 Rumsfeld, Donald, 58n3
 Ruppert, James, 58n11
 Rushdie, Salman, 476
 Rushkoff, Douglas, 102
 Russell, Deborah, 166

Rust, Stephen A., 257
 Ruston, Sharon, 303
 Ryan, Carrie, 280
 Ryan, Everhard, 156
 Ryan, Judith, 501, 502, 506
 Rymer, James Malcolm, 173, 175,
 208–211

S

Sacido-Romero, Jorge, 460, 467n7
 Sade, Marquis de, 70, 167, 197, 377,
 397, 402
 Sage, Victor, 392, 397, 402
 Saggini, Francesca, 139
 Saglia, Diego, 139, 150n4
 Said, Edward, 62, 330
 Saki, 263
Salem's Lot, 333
 Saler, Benson, 356, 358, 361n2
Sally Hemings, 430
 Sanborn, Geoffrey, 412
 The Sandman, 12
 Saren, Mike, 306, 307
 Sartre, Jean-Paul, 487
 Sassoon, Siegfried, 188
The Satanic Verses, 476
 Sävborg, Daniel, 40n1
 Savoy, Eric, 87
Saw, 366
 Scandinavia/Scandinavian, 36, 38
 Scarborough, Dorothy, 262
The Scarlet Letter, 52, 425
The Scarlet Plague, 317
Scary Movie, 124n5, 131
 Scharf, Thomas J., 50
 Schelling, Friedrich, 284
 Scherf, Kathleen, 172, 173
 Schiller, Friedrich, 207
 Schmidt, Anthony, 281
 Schneider, Peter, 373, 374
 Scholder, Amy, 378
 Schonfield, Katherine, 442, 443
 Schopenhauer, Arthur, 21, 29, 30
 Schow, David, 365, 366
 Schwartz, Alvin, 104
 Schwenger, Peter, 453
 Sconce, Jeffrey, 303, 306
 Scorsese, Martin, 125n12

- Scott, Kim, 65
 Scott, Sir Walter, 397
Scream, 131
Scream Black Murder, 72
 Scutter, Heather, 103
 Seabrook, William, 225
SEAL TEAM 666, 327, 328, 334, 336
 Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, 379
 Seltzer, Mark, 380
 Sencindiver, Susan Yi, 16, 483, 495n2
 Sendak, Maurice, 103
 Seneca, 113, 116, 132
Serial (2014), 287n3
 Serial killers, 132, 379–382, 387
 Serpell, James, 264
 Sexuality, 403, 404
 Shakespeare, William, 3, 10, 109,
 127–129, 132, 159, 265, 472
 Shapiro, Anne Dhu, 151n6
Sharpest Sight, 55
Sharp Objects, 261
 Shaw, Matt, 366
 Sheldon, Paul, 292
 Shelley, Mary, 140, 141, 170, 172, 173,
 175, 302, 303, 315, 317, 318,
 325n8, 359, 403, 404, 475, 488
 Shelton, Don, 324n5
 Shepherd, Simon, 140
The Shining, 52, 83, 125n12, 149, 279,
 357, 359
 Shklovsky, Victor, 385
 Showalter, Elaine, 454n2
 Shriver, Lionel, 260
Shutter Island, 125n12
 Shuttleworth, Sally, 403
 Shyamalan, M. Night, 257, 288n7
A Sicilian Romance, 169
 Siculus, Diodorus, 418n3
 Siddons, Anne Rivers, 263
The Silence of the Lambs, 262, 263, 380
 Silko, Leslie Marmon, 9, 54, 57
 Silverberg, Ira, 378
 Silverblatt, Michael, 377
 Simmons, Dan, 373, 500
 Simms, Eva-Maria, 249, 250
 Simpson, Philip L., 295, 380, 381
The Simpsons, 53
Sin City, 109
 Sine, Richard, 324
 Singh, Dhananjay, 8, 21–30
 Sipos, Thomas M., 114, 124
*Sir Bertrand's adventures in a ruinous
 castle*, 156
Sir Orfeo, 122
Sir Owain, 121
 Skal, David, 67
 Skinner, Alanson Buck, 53
 Skipp, John, 366–368, 372
Slade House, 448
Slaughtered Vomit Dolls, 252
 Slave mothers, 411–413
 Slaveowners, 431
 Slavery, 15, 193, 407–418, 424–431
 Slaves, 329, 409–411, 413–417, 419n8,
 424–431
 Slay, Desmond, 35
 Sleath, Eleanor, 177n1
 Slender Man, 282, 393
Slights, 438
 Slocombe, Will, 346, 351n20
 Slotkin, Richard, 88n2, 330
Slugs, 268
Small Island, 193
Small Place, A, 193
 Smith, Andrew, 286, 329, 361
 Smith, Frank, 109
 Smith, Guy N., 268
 Smith, Henry Nash, 88n4
 Smith, Jason C., 219
 Smith, Martin Cruz, 55
Smoke and Mirrors, 109
 Smollett, Tobias, 166
 Snart, John, 317, 325n7
Snorra-Edda, 40n2
 Snorri Sturluson, 9, 34, 40n1
Snow White, 283
 Snyder, Blake, 271n7
 Snyder, Sharon L., 297
 Sobol, Mathew, 309, 310
 Sök-pöm, Kim, 197, 198
Solar Storms, 56
Soldier Blue, 52, 58n8
 Soles, Carter, 257
 Sommers, Stephen, 124n1
 Sondheim, Stephen, 149
 Sonic, 457–464, 466, 467n3
Sookie Stackhouse, 382
 Sophocles, 113

- Sound, 457, 458, 460, 462–466, 467n1
 Southern Vampire Mysteries, 214
 Southey, Robert, 206–208
South Park, 53
 Spaces, 14, 16, 441–453
The Spanish Tragedy, 131, 132
 Spatial, 16
 Spector, Craig, 366–368, 372
 Spielberg, Steven, 257
 Spillers, Hortense, 411
 Spinoza, Baruch, 495
The Spirit of the Public
 Journals for 1797, 3
 Spivak, Gayatri, 62, 174
 Splatter horror, 486
 Splatterpunks, 14, 365–374, 460, 467n4
 Spooner, Catherine, 68, 297, 298
 Spufford, Francis, 278, 281
 Stage, 117
 Stallybrass, Peter, 378
 Stanner, W.E.H., 67
 Starrs, D. Bruno, 64, 72, 73
A State of Freedom, 437
 St Catherine, 125n11
 Steedman, Carolyn, 398
 Steen, Francis F., 359
 Stephan, Matthias, 11, 181
 Stephenson, Carl, 268
 Stevenson, Robert Louis, 173, 175, 315,
 317, 486, 488
 Stewart, George R.R., 268
 Stillinger, Jack, 474
 Stine, R.L., 104
 Stockton, Kathryn Bond, 103
 Stoddard Holmes, Martha, 292, 295
 Stoker, Bram, 12, 58n1, 72, 173, 175,
 176, 212, 213, 265, 306, 315, 331,
 335, 359, 382
 Stokoe, Matthew, 266
 Stokoe, Michael, 261
The Story of Fitzalan, 156
 Stouck, Mary-Ann, 125n7
 Stowe, Harriet Beecher, 419n10
The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr
 Hyde, 173, 315, 434
The Strange Library, 448
 Strasser, Dirk, 65
 Straub, Peter, 9, 78, 84–87
 Strayhorn, Joseph, 103, 108
 Strengell, Heidi, 293
The String of Pearls, 144, 175
The String of Pearls. A Romance, 143
 Suarez, Daniel, 309, 310
 Sublime, 4
 Sullivan, Thomas Russell, 152n18
 Supernatural Horror in Literature, 4, 5
 Süskind, Patrick, 197, 465, 466
 Sveinsson, Einar Ólafur, 35–37, 41n9
 Swanger, David, 356, 361n2
 Sweeney Todd, 10, 139, 143–147, 149,
 151n9, 151n10, 151n14, 175
 Syria, 334
 Szeman, Imre, 199
- T**
Take Shelter, 257
 Talairach-Vielmas, Laurence, 94
The Tale of the Body Thief, 213, 214
Tales of Terror, 12, 233–245
Tales of Wonder, 322
 Tatar, Maria, 96, 97
 Taylor, Drew Hayden, 55, 102
 Taylor, George, 146
 Taylor III, Ordner W., 15, 423
 Teachout, Terry, 471
 Technologies/technological, 13, 140,
 150n1, 301–311
 Telang, K.T., 24
The Terror, 270
 Terrorism, 327, 334–336
 Terrorist Novel Writing, 3
 Terrorists, 13, 328, 331–336
 Tettenborn, Éva, 454n8
The Texas Chain Saw Massacre, 133, 252,
 261, 372
 Thacker, Eugene, 268
 Thailand, 199
That Blackfella Bloodsucka Dance, 72
 Theaters, 10, 113, 127–137, 139–150,
 150n2, 150n3, 150n4, 151n6,
 152n22
 Theater technologies, 139
Things as They Are; or the Adventures of
 Caleb Williams, 170
 Thomas, Bronwen, 350n16
 Thompson, Jim, 380
 Thoreau, Henry David, 80, 82, 280

Thorne, Jack, 150
 Thornton, Russell, 46
Three Day Road, 55, 56
The Three Imposters, 484
Thyestes, 113, 132
 Tiptree, James, Jr., 257
 Tischleder, Babette Bärbel, 486
Titus Andronicus, 127, 132–136
 Todorov, Tzvetan, 471
 Tolstoy, Leo, 305
 Toom, Van, 69
 Torok, Maria, 450
 Toth, Josh, 341
 Townshend, Dale, 392
 Transgressions/transgressive, 107,
 196, 365–374, 374n2, 377–387,
 387n1, 436
 Tremblay, Paul, 16, 356, 500–502,
 504–507
 Tricomi, Albert H., 128, 135, 136
 Trier, Lars von, 284
 Troll, 9, 33–40, 40n2, 40n5, 40n6,
 41n9, 41n10, 41n16
 Tropp, Martin, 304
True Blood, 51
 Trumpeter, Kevin, 486
 Truss, Lynne, 265
 Tryon, Thomas, 78, 251
 Tuan, Yi-fu, 278, 283, 287
 Tulinus, Torfi H., 41n15
 Turcotte, Gerry, 68
 Turner, Frederick Jackson, 79
 Turner, Henry S., 58n4
 Turner, Jackson, 79
The Turn of the Screw, 12, 150,
 233–245, 423
 Twain, Mark, 79
12 Years a Slave, 430
28 Days Later, 225
Twilight, 221, 276
Twin Peaks, 276, 284, 287
 Tyron, Thomas, 260

U

Uglioni, Luigi, 489, 493
 Unaipon, David, 63–65, 67, 73
 The Uncanny, 12
Uncle Montague's Tales of Terror, 242
The Unconsoled, 339

Under the Skin, 261
The Undying, 68, 328, 329
 United States (US), 46, 48, 50–52, 57,
 58n8, 77, 81, 286, 327–330,
 333–335, 341, 345, 412, 424, 425
 United States Constitution, 424
 Unsworth, Len, 104
Uprooted, 278, 282
 Usher, Hezekiah, 454n5

V

Valenti, Jack, 309
 Valerius, Karyn, 319
 Vampire Chronicles, 213
*The Vampire; or, The Bride of the Isles: A
 Romantic Melo-drama*, 143,
 151n15
 Vampires/vampiric, 1, 9, 12, 33, 39, 51,
 55, 61–74, 143, 173–176, 192,
 195–197, 205–216, 306, 318, 321,
 323, 328, 331, 333, 360, 373, 379,
 382–384, 423, 438
 Vampirism, 72, 196, 209, 306, 382–384
 Vampirolgy, 73
 Van den Berg, Jacinta, 411
 van Elferen, Isabella, 458, 460, 467n1,
 468n12
 Van Toorn, Penny, 68
 Vanderbeke, Dirk, 355
 Varma, Devendra, 184–186, 395, 396
 Varney, 210
Varney the Vampire (story), 173, 175,
 208, 209, 211, 214
Varney the Vampyre (dramatic
 adaptation), 210
Vathek, 330, 331, 334
Vatnsdæla saga, 36
 Vatsyayan, K., 22
The Vegetable Man, 489
 Verstynen, Timothy, 220
 Vesalius, Andreas, 129
 Vespucci, Amerigo, 48
 “Victorian horror,” 315
 Victorian theater, 146
 Victorians, 139, 165, 172–176, 181,
 242, 259, 304, 306, 315, 316, 320,
 331, 332, 382, 454n5, 493
 Victor Sage, 175
 Video games, 3

Video Recordings Act (VRA), 370, 392
 Vidler, Anthony, 452, 453
 Vilhjálmsson, Bjarni, 36, 40n6
The Village, 286, 288n7
Village of the Damned, 115, 237
 Vilmundarson, Þórhallur, 36, 40n6
 Vincent Price, 135
 Vint, Sheryl, 223, 229, 349n6
 Virgil, 343
 Viswanathan, Gauri, 438
 Vizenor, Gerald, 54
Vlad, 196
 Voices, 457, 458, 460–466, 467n8
Völuspá, 34, 35
 Voytek, Bradley, 220

W

Wagner, Karl Edward, 368, 369
Wagner, the Wehr-Wolf, 173
 Wakefield, Sarah F., 51
 Wakefield (play), 114, 123, 125n14
 Wakefield cycles, 114, 117, 118, 125n15
Waking the Moon, 78
 Walker, Alice, 407, 408
 Walker, David, 424, 430
The Walking Dead, 135
 Wall, Barbara, 103
Wall Street, 380
 Waller, Sara, 495n1
 Walpole, Horace, 2, 166, 167, 169, 170, 172, 175, 176, 395, 396, 441
 Walsh, Sue, 12, 238
 Walter, Anna Lee, 55
 Waples, Emily, 317
 Ward, Catriona, 313
Warm Bodies, 221–223, 227–229
 Warner, Marina, 41n17, 92, 241, 245
 Warren, Kaaron, 438
 Warren, Samuel, 316
 Washington, George, 52
The Wasp Factory, 260
 Wasson, Sara, 315
The Waste Land, 187, 188
The Watcher (1982), 259
Watchers (1987), 264
 Watkiss, J., 481n2
 Watson, Sam, 65, 68–70
 Watt, James, 167, 395, 398

Wagh, Patricia, 386
 Wayans, Keenen Ivory, 124n5
We Have Always Lived in the Castle, 265, 443, 445
We Need to Talk About Kevin, 260
 Webber, Andrew Lloyd, 150
 Webster, John, 10, 134–136
 Weier, Anissa, 393
 Weinstock, Jeffrey Andrew, 417
 Weisenburger, Steven, 418n7, 428
 Welby, Lizzy, 341, 344
 Weller, Archie, 65
 Wells, H.G., 259, 268, 304, 305, 486, 489
 Welsh, Irvine, 387n1
 Weltman, Sharon Aronofsky, 144, 145, 151n11, 151n12, 151n14, 151n16
The Were-wolf, 173
 Werewolves, 51, 68, 71, 136, 173, 282
 Westcott, Thompson, 50
 Whale, James, 141
The Whalestoe Letters, 350n18
 Wharton, Edith, 77, 78, 80, 84, 85, 87, 259, 271n5
 Wheeler, Wendy, 284
Where the Bodies Are Buried, 370
 Whigham, Frank, 135
 Whiskeyjack, Elijah, 56
Whisper in the Dark, 55
 White, Allon, 378
 White, Lynn, 285
 White, Roy, 158
 White, S.A., 124n3
White Zombie, 225
 Whitehead, Colson, 221, 225, 229, 499
 Whitehouse, Mary, 371
White Is for Witching, 192
The White Witch of Rosehall, 435
 Wicke, Jennifer, 306
Wide Sargasso Sea, 435–437
Wieland; or, The Transformation: An American Tale, 16, 170, 463
Wild: A Journey from Lost to Found, 280
 Wilde, Oscar, 58n1, 173, 175, 176, 404, 405, 488
 Wilkinson, Sarah, 160–162
Willard, 263
 Williams, Linda, 368

- Williams, Susan S., 88n6
 Williamson, J.W., 283
 Williamson, Milly, 382
 Wilson, Edmund, 234, 246n2
 Wilson, Elizabeth, 342
 Wilson, Michael, 149, 152n20, 152n21
 Wilson, Jack, 52
 Winfrey, Oprah, 413
 Wing, Hannah, 56
 Winstead, Karen, 125n7
 Winter, Douglas E., 362n3
 Winter, Sarah A., 10
 Winterson, Jeanette, 340
 Wise, Robert, 6
 Wisker, Gina, 101, 103, 140, 272n13
The Witch, 266, 281, 286, 288n4
 Witchcraft, 434, 435
 Witches, 61
 Wolf, Leonard, 66, 67
 Wolfe, Cary, 262, 271n9
 Wolff, Phillip, 105, 425, 426
 Wolfreys, Julian, 172
 Wolstenholme, Susan, 206
The Woman, 284
The Woman in Black, 149, 263
 Wong, David, 500
 Wood, Ellen, 404
 Wood, Gaby, 250
 Wood, Robin, 134, 366, 367
 Woods, 49, 50, 275–287, 287n2, 287n3, 288n6, 288n7
The Woods Are Dark, 284
 Woodward, Kathleen, 302, 303
 Woodworth, Samuel, 52
 Woolf, Virginia, 188
 Wordsworth, William, 243, 475, 490–493, 495
World War Z, 196, 220, 221, 223–225, 228, 335
 Worrall, David, 139
 Worthington, Marjorie, 470, 481n2
 Worthy, Jimmy, 454n8
 Wovoka, 52
The Wretched of the Earth, 328
 Wright, Alexis, 68, 70, 71
 Wright, Angela, 135, 400
 Wright, Dare, 251
Wuthering Heights, 174
Wylding Hall, 78
 Wymer, Rowland, 130
 Wyndham, John, 257
- X**
X-Files, 397
- Y**
 Yeats, William Butler, 11, 188
 Yin, Robert, 101
 York, 114, 116, 117, 125n15
 Young, Elizabeth, 387n2
 Young, H., 210
 Young, Marty, 64, 65
- Z**
 Zaidi, A., 437
 Ziegler, Charles A., 356, 358, 361n2
 Zinn, Maxine Baca, 383
 Ziolkowski, Theodore, 349n1
 Zipes, Jack, 93
 Žižek, Slavoj, 58n3, 457, 460, 461
Zofloya, or The Moor, 15, 172, 174, 391, 392, 403
 Zombie children, 227
Zombie Cinema, 220
 Zombies, 1, 12, 33, 36, 38–39, 50, 67, 73, 130, 136, 192, 195–197, 219–230, 280, 307, 335, 358, 366, 367, 370
Zombies vs. Unicorns, 220
Zone One, 221, 224, 225, 228
 Zucker, David, 124n5